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CURRICULUM

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## Dedication

To Mike, you are my rock. Thank you for your unflagging support, understanding,  
and constant reminders that the goal of a doctorate program is “to finish.”

To my children and my students, you are my inspiration and my motivation.

To my parents, your unyielding love made this possible.

And to my brothers and sister, for always being there for me.

I love you all.

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## **Abstract**

This action research self study explored how dialogic instruction influenced 21 freshman composition students' quality of discussion, writing practices, and ability to critical think and reflect on their learning. The study participants were enrolled in two blended composition courses. The researcher engaged in a series of structured interventions to ascertain how dialogic teaching methods influenced student in person and online learning. Findings reveal that structured discussion protocols work to invite shy or reluctant students to participate. The protocols increased the overall quality of small and whole group discussions. The efficacy of blog-based discussion was mixed. Many students who actively participate in class do not participate online. However, students who are introverted, shy, or experience discussion anxiety respond positively to discussions online. Small group analysis of model texts helped students understand how targeted writing strategies improve writing. Students were able to see connections between the targeted strategies and recognized how each would be useful in future writing. Students were then able to integrate the strategies into their own writing. The more students engage in discussion based writing strategies, such as peer review, the more students perceive them as useful. Participants perceive that oral and written language skills have a dialogic relationship. This metacognition helps students transfer oral learning to written forms. Discussion can help students (re)embody writing practices and become people who view writing as part of their literate identity. Teachers can instill these skills by purposefully teaching critical discussion skills in a way that resonates with academic writing.

## Preface

During my Master's research, I studied high school students' perceptions of critical thinking developed through dialogic instruction focusing on how skills transferred to experiences in higher education. The most striking finding revealed that through practice, critical thinking "became innate." Students said they could make connections and were "easily able to consider the underlying assumptions and implications" in texts. They were used to learning through dialogic strategies, and they knew how to "grow from it." In other words, they had "become" critical thinkers and knew how to use discussions to evoke critical thinking. It wasn't just something they did consciously, a study skill or a learning strategy; critical thinking had become part of their identities as learners. As I delved deeper into meditating on critical thinking, I discovered how this finding resonated with an idea that learning is seen as involving minds and bodies interacting with the environment through thinking, feelings and actions (Gee, 2008). Through actions and dialogue students interacted with complex ideas, and over time, this process became natural. Heidegger (1997) claims bodies themselves are meaning making, that people do not possess bodies, separate from their minds, but are in fact "bodily" (p. 99). If learning is viewed "bodily," it is logical that interactions would be mediated by the senses. Through our senses we experience the world (Wysocki, 2012), so when we learn, our bodies mediate understandings. Learning, in this conceptualization, is a process of embodiment.

My master's study was a small case study of thirteen former students now enrolled in college. All the participants had been enrolled in the International

Baccalaureate Program, a program known for teaching advanced students through critical thinking (Schachter, 2008). With the goal of further examining the potential of dialogical instruction to evoke critical thinking, I began to explore ways to research the relationship between critical thinking and embodiment in other populations.

**Action Reflection Cycle.** To lend structure to my study, I used the Action-Reflection Cycle (see Table 1) adapted from McNiff and Whitehead.

(Whitehead,1993; Whitehead 2016; McNiff & Whitehead 2002; McNiff & Whitehead 2006; McNiff, 2013). I modified the cycle by adding a step “What do I currently know?” I felt this stage was necessary because it allowed me to explore current beliefs and values. After structuring my study using the cycle, I translated the results of the 8-step action research process to a typical 5-chapter format for dissertation.

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Table 1. Action-Reflection Cycle

1. What is my concern?	Identify research issue
2. Why am I concerned?	Explain concerns in relation to how values are being denied/ not followed in practice
3. What do I currently know?	Identify knowledge that informs the values and beliefs about the issue under study.
4. What kind of experiences can I describe to show the situation as it is and as it unfolds?	Offer descriptions of experiences within our context and gather data as events and happenings unfold
5. What will I do to effect change?	Imagining possibilities and choosing one of them to act on in an action plan
6. What data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?	Collect data that helps address effects of actions on concern
7. How do I ensure conclusions are fair and accurate?	Evaluating the influence of the actions in terms of values and understandings, submitting explanations to our validation process
8. How will I explain my educational influences in learning? How will I modify my ideas and practices in light of the evaluation?	Modifying concerns, ideas, and actions in the light of evaluations. Transforming ideas into new practices based on critical evaluations.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Currently I teach in the English department at a small regional state university. Because it is a small university, I teach both pre-service methods courses and freshman composition. In this role, I am able to observe general education students, get to know these students, and work with them to improve their thinking and writing. At the same time, I instruct the people who will teach writing to the next generation. This liminal space is uniquely suited for studying dialogical instruction and writing.

### **My School and My Students**

My school serves a rural community, and the majority of the students who enroll come from local schools, which face a distinctive set of challenges (Baker, 2013). In the United States, 20% of all K-12 public school students are educated in rural schools, and in Oklahoma, 60% of the student population attend rural schools (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). In fact, the report on “Why Rural Matters?” ranks Oklahoma 6<sup>th</sup> in states where rural education is a primary concern. Johnson, Showalter, Klein, and Lester (2014) note that in Oklahoma:

Rural schools are poorly funded, and only two other states have higher rates of rural students with special needs. NAEP performance scores are low and six in 10 rural students are eligible for free or reduced priced meal plans. The unemployment rate is low in Oklahoma’s rural areas, but so are the median household income and the percentage of adults with high school diplomas. (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014, p. 77)

More than half the rural students in Oklahoma qualify for free or reduced lunch, and rural students consistently underperform on state and national assessments. Students from rural areas often enter college underprepared (Means, Clayton, Conzelmann, Baynes, & Umbach, 2016). Despite these educational challenges, in



many ways, rural education issues tend to be overshadowed by urban educational issues. This is despite the fact that rural school enrollment is growing faster than in non-rural areas “and rural schools continue to grow more complex with increasing rates of poverty, diversity, and students with special needs” (p. 28).

The students in my school are mostly white (57%) or Native American (14%), first generation college students. Nearly 90% of the students come from Oklahoma. As of fall 2014, 64% of the first time bachelor’s degree seeking students continue on and enroll for a second year of college. Only 34% of the students graduate within six years. 75% qualify for financial aid and receive it (IPEDS; OSRHE). The most recent school’s annual assessment report, states that 67% of the entering freshman qualify to take ENG 1113, the required college English composition class, without remediation. To be eligible, the students have to demonstrate college readiness by receiving a 19 or better on the ACT. An additional 21% do not receive a 19 or better on the ACT, but qualify to take ENG 1113 through secondary testing (ECU Annual Assessment Report 2012-2013).

The ACT website states that a minimum score of 18 on the English portion of the test is required to have a 75% chance or higher of receiving a C in an entry level college composition class (ACT College Readiness Benchmarks). Although the two measures of readiness are slightly different (the school’s measure for readiness is a 19 and the ACT states an 18 indicates readiness), it does appear that nearly a third of the students at the institution do not meet a minimum benchmark for reading or writing.

Knowing many of my students enter college facing academic challenges, I wondered if building strong critical thinking skills developed through dialogic teaching could help them build their capacity for academic success. If so, I needed to figure out how to make these skills “innate” and enduring beyond the first year of college. My experience as instructor of composition has taught me that it is not easy to engage FYC students in conversations about texts. Often, when I asked students questions during whole group discussions, few volunteered to answer. When called upon to respond, some students became flustered. More than one student has blushed and stuttered when asked to talk about the text or asked to give feedback on a piece of writing. Whole group discussions tended to be carried by two or three participants, if carried at all. This pattern held true even when I simply asked students if they had questions about the reading or assignments. In the majority of my FYC classes, questions about assignments were so rare I was startled even when a student asked me to clarify expectations. This situation was particularly baffling because, when I individually checked in with students during work time, questions were rampant. Sometimes individual questions would have been beneficial for the group, but for some reason they did not want to talk when amidst a large group.

Small group discussions tended to work better. The students talked to each other about the content of the reading, and when I interacted with the groups, they discussed the texts and even asked some questions. I was actively involved: prompting, asking questions, and adding explanations. Discussions about a genre or style questions were less effective, even when students were provided with models

written by other students. Surprisingly, when I gave students models that I wrote during various stages of the writing process, usually through first drafts, the discussion was fairly effective and the students gave fairly insightful feedback. Yet, the same students seemed reluctant to constructively comment on each other's writing during peer review. I noticed they would mark surface errors, but seldom made written comments on each other's invention, arrangement, or style. The discussions went better when I asked the class to talk about each other's writing using a framework such as Elbow's (2000) Believing and Doubting Game. However student feedback regarding peer review's was mixed. Most students preferred individual meetings and feedback from the teacher.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the courses I teach are structured in a blended format where instruction is given both in person and online. For example, the classes meet in person two days a week for 50 minutes per class and the third weekly meeting is conducted online via Blackboard. The activities the students do on Blackboard are supposed to simulate an in class experience. All year, I attempted to foster student discussion via Blackboard's discussion board. Following my beliefs about best practices, I posted model discussion board posts and responses, gave thorough directions, and discussed what a good online discussion would look like in class. Despite this, students seldom participated beyond their initial first post. Replies to each other's discussion posts were short and affirming. Students would say things like "I totally agree with you about x!" Often statements did not encourage further discussion. As with class discussions,

many students did not participate at all. On evaluations, many students complained that they did not find online discussions useful.

Because I believe in dialectic's power to transform student learning, I am bothered by the lack of engagement in classroom discourse. The students seem to see the teacher as the one who holds knowledge and do not value each other's knowledge and insights. Yet, I have always aspired to Giroux's formulation of what pedagogy could be:

Pedagogy is simultaneously about the knowledge and practices teachers and students might engage in together and the values, social relations and visions legitimated by such knowledge and practices. Such a pedagogy listens to students, gives them a voice and role in their own learning, and recognizes that teachers not only educate students but also learn from them. (Giroux, 2013, p. 17)

Dialectical teaching requires engagement from all parties and recognizes that all voices matter. If I could cultivate my students' voices and help them believe that their ideas matter, perhaps I could engage them in effective discussions where they can grow as thinkers and writers.

Although critical literacy and dialogic instruction have been well documented in the literature (Giroux, 2011; McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2011; Boyd & Markarian, 2015), less research has been done to explore how students can actually 'become' critical thinkers.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In order to explore my beliefs about the power of dialogic instruction to engage critical thinking, and to see how I might influence my students' literacy practices, I conducted a study based on my own beliefs and practices (Bullough &

Pinnegar, 2001; Whitehead, 2016; McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). Through this study

I sought to understand:

To what extent can critical literacy, as taught through the dialogic in a rural setting, influence:

- the quality of student discussion?
- students' writing practices?
- students' ability to critically think and reflect on their own learning?

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

McNiff and Whitehead (2002) discuss how action research is informed by ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues. To explain the development of this study it is necessary to delineate how ontological, epistemological, methodological beliefs and values influenced my understanding of research, and then discuss how the beliefs and values relate to the concerns I addressed through the study. In addition my beliefs and values, there were a variety of other factors that shaped the study's design. These include my identity as a composition instructor, pedagogical theories, and the best practices that I researched to design the course curriculum used in the study. This chapter begins by exploring my beliefs in relation to my concerns, and then examines how my identity as an English teacher and knowledge about composition instruction contributed to the study. I used the knowledge described here to answer the questions: "What kind of experiences can I describe to show the situation as it is and as it unfolds?" and "What will I do to effect change?"

### **Ontological Beliefs: How I View Myself and the World; My Theory of Being**

Creswell (2013) states that ontological issues "relate to the nature of reality and its characteristics. When researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing the idea of multiple realities" (p. 20). Because I tend to view the world from a postmodern perspective wherein "knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today" (p. 27), my claims reflect multiple understandings. Through a transformative/ postmodern lens, interaction between the researcher and participants is key (Creswell, 2013). Ontological issues in action research are often

expressed as values because “action research rests on ideas to do with truth, social justice, compassionate ways of being, respect for pluralistic forms” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p. 17). As part of this philosophical stance, action researchers are expected to respect the multiplicities of beliefs and identities represented in society. In my role as researcher I strive to respect differences and find ways to help people exist peacefully together despite conflicting viewpoints (McNiff, 2013; McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). Action research was inspired by “humanitarian and egalitarian ideologies” (McNiff, 2013, p. 7) to create free and informed societies. I see action research as a systematic means of enacting shared values through practice and a way to improve society through a “personal commitment to action” (McNiff, 2013, p. 28). At the core of these shared beliefs is the notion that when actions work to “try to do something, just one positive life-changing action, there is hope. Improvement is still improvement, no matter how small” (p. 17).

### **Epistemological Beliefs: How I View Teaching and Learning**

In the introduction to Freire and Macedo’s (2001) *Reading the Word and the World*, Giroux discusses why political empowerment is imperative. Giroux provides a socio-cultural definition of literacy and then describes critical literacy as being “both a narrative for agency as well as a referent for critique” (p. 11) through which learners can rescue historical and cultural experiences from the dominant powers and critique current social situations and relationships. Foucault (1972) asserts that in a democratic society education can provide a means to access different kinds of discourse; however, in reality, education serves as “a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the

knowledge and the powers it carries with it” (p. 227). Literacy itself is not freedom, but a means of engaging in the conversation required to reclaim individual and cultural voices. Critical literacy provides learners with the skills to question and critique and to envision ways the world could be better and more democratic. Through these skills, literacy becomes a powerful tool for forging “knowledge, power, and social practice” (Giroux, 2001, p. 11) into an instrument for decision-making. This notion of literacy empowers students, with their collective differences, and gives them a voice in knowledge construction. To teach people to become “present as active authors in their own worlds” (Freire, 2001, p. 17) they need to view reading as more than a transaction, and see that reading does more than revealing connections to their lives, views, and realities. Reading offers opportunities to challenge those views. Instead of accepting what they read, students could be encouraged to evaluate the views and realities presented by the author (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004).

Because critical thinking has the power to transform students’ educational lives, critical literacy serves as the theoretical foundation for my epistemological beliefs. As an educator, I am concerned with providing students with “access to any kind of discourse” (Foucault, 1972, p. 227) and conceive of literacy as a transformative force wherein students gain knowledge and personal power. When readers move from passive acceptance, they begin to understand how language and literacy practices are shaped by the dominant discourses, and how education controls the distribution of roles, powers, and practices (Foucault, 1972). Critical literacy holds that, to work towards a better future, education needs to provide



students with tools to critique their ideas, values, and beliefs as well as the inherent power structures complicit in creating those beliefs (Giroux, 2011). Society needs thinkers who are not afraid of change who can listen with empathy, accept differences, and who use these skills to transform their worlds.

**Embodied learning.** We engage with others and with objects using our senses, and learning occurs when the self and others interact (Latta & Buck, 2008). During this exchange, teachers can guide meaning making using reciprocal and generative inquiry. Through inquiry, gaps in understanding are revealed and the spaces can be use to generate new meaning (Biesta, 2004). Learning occurring through gaps in understanding connects to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) theory of assemblage. Deleuze and Guattari opposed "arboreal" or notions of thinking and being in the world. By arboreal, they mean the hierarchical forms that characterize relationships using trees, with substantial roots and branches that subdivide into smaller branches. This view, they felt, reinforced patterns of dominance and oppression (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). They said, "We're tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They've made us suffer too much" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987 p. 15). Trees delineate and create hierarchies. Trees suggest that one idea be held over another.

To get away from the rooted dominance of trees, they proposed a new rhizomatic theory. Rhizomes are useful to conceptualize learning in a non-linear manner because they represent "an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by the circulation of states" (p. 21). Unlike trees that link each idea

to a previous idea in a linear manner, rhizomes are anarchical and can ignite ideas or objects at any place. They work by building links across gaps, and categorize and organize through non-fixated lines of connection. Rhizomes can join, rupture, and reconnect anywhere along the line in diverse and creative ways as sections regenerate and form new pathways. An assemblage is their term for this multiplicity, the ability to realign, change, and transform. Identity, considered in this manner, is perpetually destabilized (Hagood, 2005). Assemblages change as they expand and form new connections. The established pre-existing lines in the assemblage are lines of articulation. When a rupture occurs in a line of articulation, the new line that forms from the rupture is called a line of flight. Because this process is constantly occurring, the assemblage is in constant flux, and its identity perpetually destabilized (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). The system works to address systemic imbalance because “lines of flight also open new possibilities for seeing, living, and organizing political resistance” (Dimitriadis & Kamberelis, 2006). Lines of flight as opportunities for transformation resonates with learning as critical inquiry. Learning is a destabilization wherein individuals’ identities, their bodies and selves, change as they interact with new ideas, objects, and others. The senses mediate the ruptures and work to embed new understandings reforming and rebuilding “relationships between self, others, and subject matter” (Latta & Buck, 2006, p. 317). Education exists and is remade through praxis (Freire, 2014).

Recognizing how the senses mediate learning by facilitating the interactions and exchanges required to embed new understandings creates a sense of how learning is embodied. Gee (2004) holds that learning is embodied because people

tie language, perception, and action together. When people learn, they connect abstract concepts to real life situations and circumstances to create meaning, tying language to experience and actions. Bodies are “experiential beings in motion, both inscribed and inscribing subjectivities. That is, the experiential body is both a representation of self (a ‘text’) as well as a mode of creation in progress (a ‘tool’)” (Perry & Medina, 2011, p. 63). Bodies are “inscribed” with lines of articulation and are working on “inscribing” new lines of flight. Through actions in the world and interactions with others we embed learning upon our bodies where “neither subject or otherness are bound entities: they intermingle” (Latta & Buck, 2006, p. 317) and build relations that grow understandings as they intermingle. Freire (2001) supports language as an embodied, rhizomatic practice. Freire believes readers “read the world” (p. 29) before they read words. Readers’ realities (social, cultural, and political) and sense of language are intertwined and inseparable. What words are, and what they mean, is shaped through our exposure to them, a highly individualized process inseparable from a person’s culture, background, and even their bodies because “reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world. Language and reality are dynamically interconnected” (p. 29). Therefore, Freire thinks literacy instructors should recognize and embrace literacy’s humanity. This discussion of readers and worlds as combining and intertwining conveys literacy’s embodiment and implies a rhizomatic system wherein reading is inseparable from the system. Writing, the practice through which people express how they read the

world, operates in a similarly rhizomatic fashion. Thus, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the body's role in literacy practices.

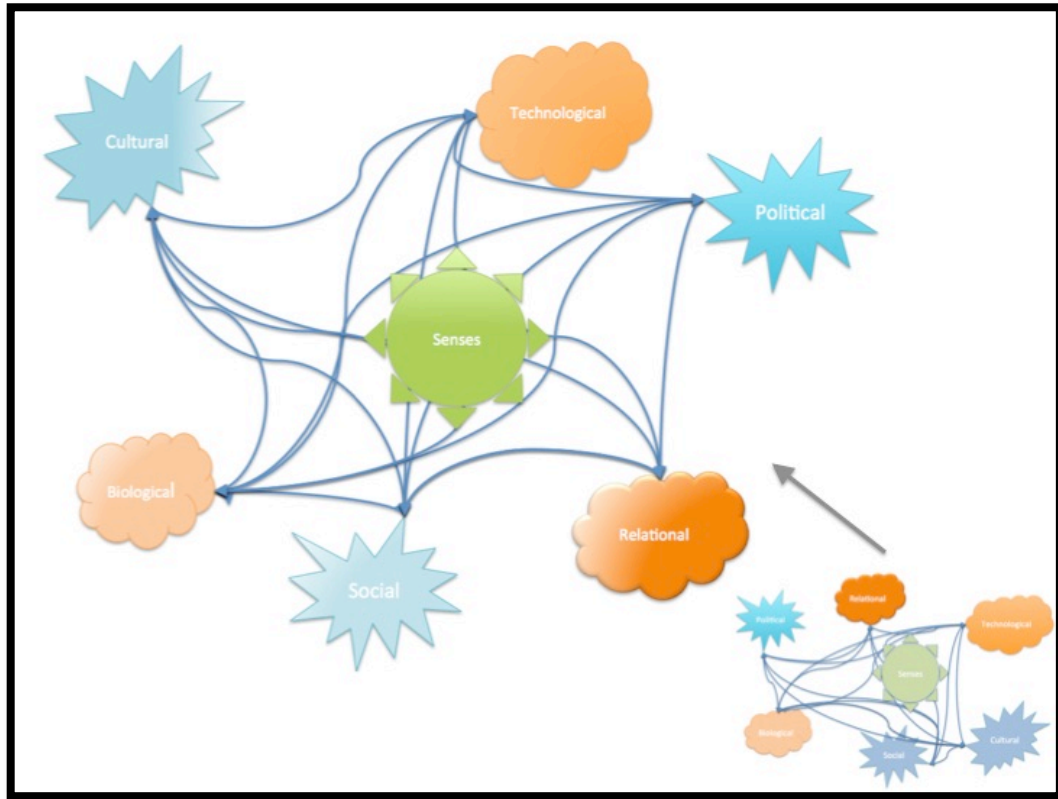
Dolmage (2012) argues:

The dominant discourse surrounding the teaching of writing focuses on texts and thoughts, words and ideas, as though these entities existed apart from the bodies of teachers, writers, audiences, communities. As a discipline, broadly speaking, we in composition and rhetoric have not acknowledged that we have a body, bodies; we cannot admit that our prevailing metaphors and tropes should be read across the body, or that our work has material, corporeal bases, effects, and affects. (p. 110)

Cooper (2010) claims that writers work within a “matrix” of writing wherein, “Writing is...always an interaction with other beings and objects in our surroundings, an ongoing process of stimulus and response that we habitually misconceive as autonomous planned action” (p. 22). Freire's theories sound strikingly similar to those espoused by Cooper and Dolmage, with literacy an organic interaction between people (with minds and bodies), their community, and their environment.

Ignoring the role of the body in learning is becoming problematic for scholars who are also now wondering if meaning making could be hindered as a result (Dolmage, 2012). There is a long tradition of describing texts as separate from creators, contexts, and audiences ignoring the body, even though the body is a context for writing. Dolmage (2012) proposes that instead, a “corporeal turn” (p. 115) in theory that recognizes literacy as being both embodied and ideological. Perry and Medina (2011) define bodies as “corporeal, biological, sensual, social, cultural, and ultimately relational” (p. 63), a notion which adds to embodiment how socio-cultural, historical, and political forces influence the capacity for growth

in relation to environments. Discourses become embedded on the body through learning. Today, digital and new literacies also engage our senses and impact how we create meanings (New London Group, 1996) in new ways that further complicate notions of embodied learning. Taking into account all these complexities, I define embodied learning as envisioning thinking, learning, and reflection as not just being social, cultural and political, but biological, technological, and relational. Embodied learning is mediated by the senses, through which individuals engage with their environments and imprint new understandings on the body. Figure 1 depicts my definition of embodied learning as an assemblage. The social, cultural, and political elements interact with the biological, technological, and relational. The senses are in the middle mediating learning. The assemblage of learning changes as new learning becomes incorporated when previously established lines of articulation break and reform new lines of flight. The breaks can occur at any point between any of the elements. Learning is constantly transforming and being remade through our interactions with others and our environments.



*Figure 1.* Embodied learning as an assemblage. The figure shows how the assemblage changes as new understandings become incorporated.

**Action research as assemblage.** Action research can be seen as an assemblage in several ways. The multiplicity of vectors, lines of articulation, and lines of flight that are characteristic of a rhizome works “to provide both a motif for practice and the methodological basis for inquiring into it” (Gale, Turner, & McKenzie, 2013, pp. 559-560). In the gaps that occur when a line of articulation breaks during thoughtful inquiry, new connections and lines are formed through interactions with others leading to a “growing sense of the intra-active nature of these becomings that, I feel, cannot be captured through the use of these terms” (p. 560). Freire (2014) even discusses inquiry in a way that is reminiscent of an

assemblage, “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). With these ideas in mind, action research can be considered a process of “invention and re-invention” wherein through inquiry, a researcher reveals spaces that can be formed and shaped through thoughtful interactions (interventions). In other words, when I engage with my students and reflect on the interactions, I relearn (deepen) my understanding of them as learners, and I can use that newly deepened understanding to further shape my practices.

**The importance of reflection to teaching.** Yagelski (1999) discusses why reflection is challenging, but important for writing teachers. He says, “careful, critical reflection on our teaching should at times be unsettling, uncomfortable, even painful. This discomfort is part of the effort to attain a more complex understanding of our practice and how it affects—how it empowers or disempowers—our students” (p. 34). He holds that self-doubt is part of the process, but it can be hard to move through doubt into better practice. Pedagogical change involves shifting how we interact with students, so reflecting on student-teacher relationships is necessary. Teachers also have to acknowledge that how a class functions is “in large part a function of the teacher’s identity as both teacher as students construct it” (p. 38). This identity exists in relation to the system within which it operates, shaping understandings of the teacher’s identity. Therefore, changing teaching practices requires rethinking teaching identity.

Freire (2014) discusses the importance of critical reflection in teaching in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He feels teachers need to understand students' perspectives by dialoging with them but not imposing agendas upon students. Yagelski (1999) agrees adding that fostering students' critical thinking and consciousness requires "a delicate balancing act" (p. 41) so that teachers use their authority in a respectful manner to affirm student thoughts and beliefs. Such a position creates internal conflict and complicates the teacher's identity even as they grapple with reflecting on how to improve. Reflection on teaching is actually a reflection on interactions and how student relationships intermingle with teacher identities. Yagelski (1999) says through reflection, writing teachers learn, "that good teaching is not about the teacher" (p. 43). The students' needs must supersede the teacher's agenda.

Furthermore, even when a teacher aims to legitimize students' worldviews and build relationships based on trust, the teacher maintains a power position over the student, which creates a systemic imbalance. Elbow (1986) discusses this when he argues teachers need to "embrace contraries," At times, teachers have to impose upon students' agency as they work to empower them. If teachers are open to accepting all the contradictions and imbalances that exist in teacher-student relationships, if teachers actively strive to perceive their own weaknesses, then they may start to create pedagogies that truly work to engage students (Yagelski, 1999). Doubt can become a cycle of reflection and action that is generative and "attends a genuine effort to address students' needs as literate persons" (p. 48).



**The importance of student-teacher relationships.** Turner and Hoeltzel (2011) found that “in order to reach students in diverse classrooms, language arts teachers must know their students in order to match students’ prior knowledge with the content and curricula to be taught” (p. 331). To “know their students,” teachers have to build strong relationships, and building relationships requires understanding and empathy. Gere and Berebitsky (2009) say that when high school students are asked what makes a teacher highly qualified, among the factors students believe are most important are a teacher’s ability to create a safe, respectful, culturally responsive learning environment; a teacher’s ability to create relationships; and to know how students learn. All these factors require empathy and concern for students and their feelings. The same students believe that when a teacher’s qualifications focus on content and credentials, the evaluation fails because it doesn’t measure how a teacher creates an engaging, meaningful learning environment. The importance of relationships matters even more with students from diverse backgrounds with different languages and cultural experiences. By learning about students, a teacher shows they care, and students work harder for teachers who value them and the unique perspectives they bring. (Aguilar, Fun, Jago, 2007). To create a learning environment that leads to embodied learning experiences, relationships are a vital component of the process.

Elbow (2001) theorizes that a teacher’s attitude towards students can determine success or failure at the college level. He argues educators should enter teaching believing “everyone is brilliant” (p. 11). He claims that, as people grow up, they face obstacles and failures that thwart their vision of self as intelligent.

Teachers, however, need to see students in terms of the potentiality for greatness they may not currently show. Elbow says, “the hypothesis here is that everyone is brilliant, but that they function badly or well according to how clouded or shut down they are—or how much their brilliance is given a change to flourish” (p. 12). Accordingly, to teach, educators need to show students how they can function brilliantly. Students need a chance to succeed, and one of a teacher’s jobs is to empower students to take chances and find their own voice. Elbow explains why relationships with students matter: “I think I see students being smarter, thinking more deeply, and handling words better when teachers look for their brilliance, treat them as smart, and support them in dealing with what is trying to cloud them over” (p. 13).

Seeing students as brilliant and treating them as though they are smart is a powerful tool for transforming their literate identity. Literate identity can be defined as a person’s perception of their literate attributes that include: competence, role, and relation to others as a literate person in a particular time and place (Beach & Young, 1997). People develop their literate identities as they participate in various literacy activities throughout their lives (Wenger, 1998). Literate identities are “dynamic and changing with the changing circumstances of life, and the ways in which they develop powerful insight into the practices and values in which they occur” (Beach, Ward, Dorsey, Limbrick, Paris, Lorinczova, Maslova, Mirseitova, 2013, p. 159). Learners have multiple, situational, literate identities. They bring these identities with them when they enter new literacy experiences, and they interpret new literacy experiences using the sense of literate self that best accords

with the new situation. When students enter college, they interpret the literacy experiences they encounter there using the literate self that has been shaped with previous encounters with academic writing. If this literate self is positive, they are more likely to thrive in the face of academic challenges.

**Self-efficacy, identity, and success.** A positive literate identity is especially helpful for new college students because it will reinforce their self-efficacy. Bandura (1977) proposed that people's belief in their ability to be successful is a strongly related to their motivation to succeed in an endeavor. If people believe they can succeed, they will work harder, be more persistent, and more resilient when challenges appear. Bandura felt that the belief was even more important than innate abilities. Interestingly, the belief in one's ability to succeed or not can end up being "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Tschannen-Moran & McFarlane, 2011, p. 218). Because self-efficacy beliefs fluctuate more when people begin a new endeavor, when everything is new and their level of surety perpetually changes as they perpetually encounter new ideas and tasks, it is vital that a high self-efficacy is established early on (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). A high self-efficacy is important to establish early on because established efficacy beliefs can be difficult to change. For college freshman academic self-efficacy can be important for success in college. Students with a strong belief in their academic abilities are more likely to persist in the face of challenges (Kelly, Kendrick, Newgent, & Lucas, 2007). Therefore, students who have a strong literate identity and see themselves as possessing strong reading and writing abilities have a better self-efficacy in this

academic realm. These students are more likely to show tenacity when academic writing becomes challenging.

### **Methodological Beliefs: How I Conduct Research**

Bradbury (2016) defines action research as “a democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, to the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern.”

Bulloughs and Pinnegar (2001) say that each study calls for the interested parties to negotiate their roles. Action researchers engage with problems and people instead of simply seeking to understand them. “Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing with, not on or about, people” (Bradbury, 2016, p. 1). While there are myriad types of action research, they all use research to actively solve problems.

Praxis is central to action research. Researchers work with participants (by consultation or by asking them to serve as co-researchers) to change the systems being studied. Participants help describe issues, plan and conduct research, create invention plans, and analyze results (Bradbury, 2016). Many times, distinctions between researchers and stakeholders are eliminated (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002).

Action researchers hold that theory and practice are inextricably intertwined and “practice generates knowledge, including theory, and theory can be tested in practice, not just applied” (Noffke & Somekh, 2011, p. 94). Problems are situated in a local context where the goal is systemic transformation. The theories that are generated are locally contextualized and tested through intervention strategies, “that is, through experiments that bear the double burden of testing hypotheses and effecting some (putatively) desired change in the situation” (Herr & Anderson,

2015, p. 5). Action research is recursive. The resulting changes are studied through reflection. New interventions are designed and implemented using the reflection of researcher and participants. Research generating knowledge in action (Bradbury, 2016). This recursive cycle is guided by principles that help researchers define roles and act responsibly. Bradbury (2016) establishes seven standards for quality in action research as follows in Table 2.

1. Quality requires articulation of objectives.	• Explicitly explain and address objectives
2. Quality requires partnership and participations.	• Consult or partner with stakeholders to ensure participative values are reflected in the work.
3. Quality requires contribution to action research theory-practice.	• Research adds to the wider body of practice knowledge and/or theory—it contributes to the literature.
4. Quality requires appropriate methods and process.	• Clearly laid out and explained research process and methods that ‘show’ not just ‘tell’ about each aspect of the process.
5. Quality requires actionability.	• Research suggests new ways to act and suggests ideas for ways to respond to needs.
6. Quality requires reflexivity.	• Researcher takes a personal, self-critical stance and uses this stance to research with clarity about their role in the process, role in context, and reasons for conducting the research
7. Quality requires significance.	• Insights have relevance and provide insight and meaning to a broader context and can supports a the growth of people and communities

**Self-study action research.** Self-study action research is a sub genre of action research wherein researchers study their own practices in order to make change. Self-study is appealing to modern researchers because of postmodern identity concerns (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). Butler (1990) asserts that all

identity construction is performative. Personhood can be seen as not something that is coherent and stationary, but as Goggin (2009) claims identity “always pushes beyond the discursive boundaries of any term—whether social, political, gendered, racial, sexed, national, and so on” (p. 18). Blair (1999) describes identity as being “always in medias res.” Identity, like action research, is “a socially and culturally mediated rhetorical praxis that takes place through discourse and other social practices” (qtd in Goggin, 2009, p. 19). Self-study provides a way for researchers to examine their current role and actions situated within the context where they want to effect change.

Bullough and Pinnegar argue that “for public theory to influence educational practice it must be translated through the personal” (p. 15). For this translation to become research, personal study must be connected by evidence and analysis to issues in a situated context in a time and place. Self-study research does not focus on the personal, *per se*, but on the intersection between personal and practice. The careful negotiation of personal and practice must be evident in the research from the data collected, to how it was analyzed, and then presented in order for the “so what” question to be answered. Studying oneself is not an excuse to ignore rigor in research. The scholarship standards for the chosen methodology must be met.

Research, whether done about others or about oneself, is always personal. As Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) put it, “who a researcher is, is central to what the researcher does” (p. 13). In order to understand who I am as a researcher, I need to study my own practice. This better understanding of myself as a teacher and

researcher will help me create more personal and ethical research in the future. Only through digging deep into my own practices and beliefs can I learn the skills to engage others and conduct critical participatory action research projects in the future. Beginning in self-study is particularly important because, as English Education professor, I aim to engage with the students and other stakeholders in the community to improve literacy practices. Foucault (2010) supports self-study as a starting place when he states “if one is interested in doing historical work that has political meaning, utility and effectiveness, then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question” (p. 64). To engage in the students’ literacy struggles, I need to better understand them.

### **How Beliefs, Values, and Experiences Relate to My Concern**

Because of my past teaching experiences, I entered the study with a belief that dialogic instruction could influence critical thinking. This belief could cause me to enter the study as a true believer (Herr & Anderson 2015). To explore my concern with an open mind, I needed to reflect on the beliefs that shaped my practices and use that reflection to create a methodologically sound framework wherein I could explore my concern. Ontologically, my concern was informed by a belief that all knowledge is contextual. Therefore any attempt to understand how dialogic instruction could influence student discussion, writing, and reflection practices had to be situated in the setting I hoped to change. My past positive experiences with dialogic practices were contingent upon their setting in the IB English Programme working with advanced students. I had to recognize that

instructional practices that worked in that context may not be appropriate or helpful, and that I needed to study what could create meaningful change for the students in my current setting. This belief helped me live out through my research a “personal commitment to action” (McNiff, 2013, p. 28) that enabled me to better understand how to approach dialogic teaching in this context.

Epistemologically, I believe in embodied learning and view thinking, learning, and reflection as being social, cultural, and political as well as biological, technological, and relational. Embodied learning is mediated through the senses, and new learning is imprinted upon the body. Learning in this definition is an assemblage. Students enter the classroom as an assemblage of their past experiences. To help them form lines of flight, I need to understand their lines of articulation and how these lines interact with my own. This led me to view dialogic writing instruction as a matrix, and view my role as a mediator of interactions and experiences. Through carefully designed research, I could invent and re-invent myself as a literacy teacher; and, through carefully designed classroom experiences, my students could invent and re-invent themselves as writers and thinkers. My hope is doing this was to become the teacher these student need, and designing the study was a way for me to “rethink my identity as a teacher” (Yagelski, 1999, p. 39). Strong student teacher relationships are key to being able to live my values through my practices. Therefore, it was imperative that the study incorporated ways to build relationships. Methodologically, action research fits my ontological and epistemological beliefs. I believe that knowledge is situational and literacy can be transformative; therefore, I needed to study literacy’s potential influence to see if I



could create change. Specifically, I needed to study my practices and the consequences of my practices to discover if they aligned with my beliefs about literacy and learning.

### **Literature that Informs the Study**

In addition to the previously described beliefs and values, there were a variety of other factors that shaped the study's design. My identity as a composition instructor is shaped by my past experience as a secondary English teacher and my current identity as South Western University's English Education professor. These identities shaped how I viewed composition instruction when I designed the study. These identities likewise informed the best practices that I researched to design the course curriculum used in the study. The following section explores how my identity as an English teacher, pedagogical research, and knowledge about composition instruction contributed to the study.

**Why my identity matters in my study.** Most people who work in English do not teach at major research universities, and most English professors at research universities do not teach general education students. Much of the work is being done by faculty at small schools who teach general education students, temporary faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and high school English teachers. Miller (2010) states that English is taught from elementary school through graduate school, "but English professors rarely attend to their expansive educational base because academics have historically claimed professional standing not as educators but as disciplinary specialists" (p. 5) In fact, academics separate their professional identities from their service duties and, by doing so, actually discount the ways that

their work can be useful for general education students or teacher education. This distinction can be seen in the divide between the MLA and NCTE. The MLA stopped publishing pedagogy related articles in 1903, and then the NCTE formed in 1911 to address the very concerns the MLA devalued. Applebee (1974) tells how English Education broke off from English when NCTE's founders attempted to gain control of secondary English despite of a lack of knowledge concern secondary English instruction. Tremmel (2001) claims that college educators "adopted a superior attitude toward their counterparts in the schools" (p. 9) and secondary English educators always have been second-class citizens.

When teachers moved out of English, writing instruction became marginalized at both the college and high school level. Brereton (1995) claims "writing's instruction's place at the bottom was sealed" (p. 22), and through this redefinition, writing instructors' roles were equally devalued. Miller (2010) argues the departmental separations create a dysfunctional system wherein the academics actively ignore the very specialties that serve to renew the field and pass on knowledge and expertise to future generations. Miller says professors and teachers seldom interact and do not view each other as coworkers. This is problematic because all who are involved in teaching English are "writing teachers and teachers of writing teachers" (Tremmel, 2001, p. 24). To fix the systemic dysfunction Miller (2010) claims that instead of calling the field English, we should reframe ourselves as Literacy studies and by doing so, re-embrace the various aspects of English in an "integrative framework that founds work with literature, language, writing, and

teaching on an equal footing by providing a bottom-up perspective that focuses on the expansive power base of our discipline” (pp. 5-6).

Too many English professors do not see themselves as teacher educators, even though they teach English to the future secondary teachers and English majors who will go on to teach at the college level. As a field, English would be better served if it were to bring literacy experts together and create a vision that respects the possibilities of all fields of literacy work. Creating a common vision of English as literacy could work to make literacy studies more engaging. Literacy experts could make English matter if people could conceive of “reading and writing as modes of involvement with the lived world” (p. 246). Those who teach in multiple roles have a unique potential to effect change on the literacy learning in our communities. We can reach out to our stakeholders to “confront market forces at a grassroots level” and grow community literacy systems that can “build public support for its work and to help students see that work as a collective enterprise rooted in the traditions of diverse communities”. (Miller, 2010, p. 234)

**The transition from high school writing to FYC.** Fanetti, Bushrow, and DeWeese (2010) believe that instead of thinking of postsecondary education as a distinctly different entity, education should be seen as a continuum “with high school learning intended specifically to prepare students for the next level of study” (p. 77). Severing writing curriculums between grade 12 and grade 13 is illogical because “the majority of first-year composition students still have one foot firmly planted in high school,” (Tremmel, 2001, p. 24). Unifying curricula is problematic because post-secondary and higher education currently suffer from a divided sense

of purpose. College is seen as a place for students to learn to critically think and discover their own identity and voice. High school is seen as a long series of standardized tests. College, therefore, values skills that are “resistant to large-scale, objective standardization” (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010, p. 78), while standardization does not prepare students for the expectations of college.

Standardization impacts writing instruction as well. When secondary curriculums focus on standardized writing, students do not learn to write for college. English teachers are all too aware standardized test results are used to criticize college students for entering college with “stark knowledge deficits” (Mapes, 2016, p. 687). Students bring what they learn with them to college, so it is inevitable that some practices cultivated by an assessment driven environment would travel with them. One of these practices is standardized writing.

Even when high school teachers value writing and see themselves as good writing instructors, the constraints created by standardized writing requirements serve to deflate their efforts to show students how writing matters beyond testing. Unfortunately, because of this model, “we are turning out Big Macs instead of the ‘lifelong learners’ for which every school’s mission statement seems to indicate a desire” (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010, p. 80). Some college instructors feel they spend time teaching students to unlearn rules learned in high school, and this results in “students feeling like they were being ‘tricked’ by the instructor who suddenly tells them they can write in first person and start sentences with conjunctions” (p. 80).

The philosophic divide between high school and post-secondary education makes first-year composition invaluable for transitioning students into the college way of viewing writing and learning. First-year composition can “prepare you for college level reading and writing and for the critical reading and writing that you will do every day in your career after college” (Singh-Corcoran, 2011, p. 24). FYC can help students become metacognitive about rhetorical strategies, language, and (Wardle, 2007). By teaching students strategies for learning to write “how to learn to write, they learn to consider how writing operates in the university” (Bergmann & Zepernick 2007). Basically, students need to learn what Shannon Carter (2008) calls rhetorical dexterity, “the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice” (p. 15). To teach students this kind of dexterity with the written word, students need to cultivate both creative and critical thinking.

**College writing curriculum.** Sullivan (2015) argues that creativity and creative aspects of writing are undervalued in college writing. He discusses how experts in a variety of fields are arguing the need to cultivate creativity. Sternberg, an intelligence expert believes creativity is requisite for success and developed a model that places creativity at the forefront of college curriculum. Sternberg holds that skills taught in college courses, especially entry-level courses, do not prepare students for career success. He argues the principle skills colleges need to develop are wisdom, intelligence, and creativity synthesized (WISCS). Sullivan notes that when Costa and Kallick (2008) compiled important habits of mind for students, creativity topped the list. Creativity was followed by critical thinking and problem

solving, which is similar to Sternberg's concern with analytical intelligence. Sullivan states that even business writers are advocating for a greater focus on creativity noting "creativity has become a prized and valuable commodity in the fiercely competitive global marketplace" (2015, p. 15).

Sullivan adds that when the Writing Program Administration (WPA), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and National Writing Project (NWP) collaborated to create a "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing" creativity was mentioned as key to college success in a wide range of fields. The document lists the following habits of mind as being essential:

- Curiosity—the desire to know more about the world.
- Openness—the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.
- Engagement—a sense of investment and involvement in learning.
- Creativity—the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.
- Persistence—the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short and long-term projects.
- Responsibility—the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.
- Flexibility—the ability to adapt to situations, expectation, or demands.
- Metacognition—the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.

Sullivan (2015) points out how many ways creativity features on the list saying, “Curiosity, openness, flexibility, and metacognition can all be grouped together within a suite of dispositional characteristics that feed and nurture creativity. These are all vital important elements we should be privileging in the composition classroom” (p. 16). Furthermore, he feels that instead of simply privileging critical thinking as vital, teachers should focus on critical and creative thinking.

One compositional school known for a focus on creativity is expressivism. Goldblatt (2017) argues that while few composition scholars would call themselves expressivists, philosophical traces are found throughout the field. The movement is at the core of The National Writing Project (NWP), one of the most significant approaches to writing in k-12 schools across the United States. However, at the college level there is a bias against expressivism that can be partially tied to its current prevalence in K-12 education. Few college compositionists view high school writing instruction methods as valid for college. Goldblatt (2017) states that in the ongoing battle to legitimize composition in college, researchers and theorists have failed to consider how k-12 practices might work well in college English departments. Despite the less than hospitable view of expressivism, the ideas are part of the culture of college writing instruction. Regarding expressivism in college English instruction O’Donnell (1996) comments, “what we do is encourage students to bring words to bear on their experiences, to ground their writing in their lives, to be responsible for their words, and to be responsible to the community in which they are reading, writing, and responding” (p. 429). O’Donnell’s vision of college English instruction clearly resonates with expressionist ideology. Likewise,

Goldblatt (2017) feels students need an “intimate and compelling” need to write, a personal connection that builds an intrinsic motivation to pursue writing. He wants to believe that students can learn a new academic way of being a writer without more “heavily codified” instruction. He says, “I want writing to matter to my students, but I want them first of all to find what matter by writing, not by studying experts” (p. 462).

***Personal writing.*** The move in writing instruction in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century/ early 21<sup>st</sup> century has been away from expressivist writing. There has been a greater concern with critical thinking and critical expression and with this theoretical move, personal writing fell out of fashion. However, Banks (2012) argues that some personal writing forms, which may or may not be narrative, are more intellectually rigorous than personal narratives. Instead Banks advocates for an embodied approach to personal writing that is strongly grounded in an expressivist approach. Banks feels that expressivist pedagogy reminds teacher that the body and bodily experiences play an important role in discourse. Banks argues that teaching and writing are embodied practices and as such contain identity practices that make explorations of the self and explorations of the past useful. He also argues that educators’ reactions to personal writings as ‘less’ than academic may be a product of our training. English professionals spent so much time trying to remove the self from research studies and writing that they don’t know what to do with the self when it appears. Still he reminds that the text and text creator cannot be separated. Reading and writing are not universal experiences, but highly individualized and contextualized.



Many important events, such as violent events, inscribe themselves on the body and affect how people understand themselves and others. Furthermore, the body grows, hurts, and changes like writing grows, struggles, can be painful, and transforms. “Writing through the body lets writing make the same (often) tentative steps the body does, and as readers, we recognize those movements as metaphors of our own lived experiences” (p. 25). Sharing personal stories with students through modeling personal writing and discussing it with them helps students understand their teacher and shared stories can help each party better understand their own experiences. Delving into lived experiences can help better face new ones with confidence and understanding.

Turner posits, “language is inseparable from conceptual thought; conceptual thought in turn is inseparable from what it means to have a human body and lead a human life” (1994, p. 17). Because of this, the body plays a role in our creation of metaphors and our meaning creation of these metaphors. Therefore, developing a better self-understanding can impact the ability to understand and write metaphorically. Transforming language through self-exploration can lead to “cognitive shifts” wherein personal writing become “arguments as disclosure” and through sharing past experiences, the effects on the body can be felt. Personal writing can also help students understand ethos as they seek to understand their identities, relationships, and contexts.

*Literacy narratives.* A literacy narrative is a type of personal writing where the author “stories” their past experiences with reading and writing and other literacy events. The goal, in part, is to “shed light on literacy itself and its role in

our personal and public lives” (Smith, 2015, p. 116). To get students to tell true stories and accomplish the goal of actual sharing, teachers need to carefully construct assignments. According to Gee, “powerful literacy depends on the learned ability to write and talk about—well—writing and talking. That is, the becoming literate to literacy and developing modes and methods to critique discourse” (pp. 56–57). Mapes (2016) claims literacy narratives help students work through their past literacy experiences to discover how these experience shape their current relationship with literacy. Although some composition researchers decry literacy narratives as encouraging narrative success stories that are overly simplistic, Mapes argues that examining past literacy experiences can be useful for students entering a new stage of literacy development. Literacy narratives encourage students to explore the communities and cultures that shaped their language practices. Therefore, these writings are useful for helping students “acknowledge themselves as legitimate readers, writers, and producers of text” (p. 689), which is an important step for helping students develop as academic writers. The narratives also create opportunities for relationships and meaning making by fostering student reflection on the “intricate webs” that shaped them throughout their lives. Discussions about literacy narratives can foster community through the sharing of stories that unify students through their lived experiences with writing.

Sharma (2015) conducted a qualitative study of literacy narratives of students in different cultures for MA thesis. He found scholars were divided over whether the assignments were useful for students. Advocates believe it enhances “students’ epistemological agency through a process of reflection about the nature

of knowledge and learning” (p. 106). Critics feel it “stymies students creativity” and leads to a lack of “intellectual engagement” (p. 106). Students from different cultures can view learning and the role as learner differently, and if the culture sees epistemology differently, a well-designed and explained literacy narrative can help students “unpack cultural and epistemological assumptions, values, and beliefs” (p. 107). This requires teaching the genre as a knowledge making act and the many ways literacy is engrained in our experiences, cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs. The assignment should foreground how literary lives are tied to other lived experiences.

*The Personal Creed Project.* Creger (2004) asserts that students yearn for personal learning experiences. He believes they seek education that is “devoted to learning about themselves and how to connect themselves more fully to others and to the whole of experience” (p. xviii). Learning should be dedicated to developing the full potentialities of each learner. To make learning worthwhile, learning needs to be more than facts. Students need to use the facts to make meaning for themselves. This meaning needs to be personalized within each students values as taught through their experiences. This learning exist in a spiral where students master facts, compose meaning, and discover values, which leads to a need for new and different facts, meanings, and values.

Creger used this idea of learning to develop a project to help his students both learn about who they are and who they want to become. The Personal Creed Project is a reflective project where in students look back at their past “influences and inspirations, contemplate what they now stand for, and imagine the kinds of

lives they wish to lead in ten years” (p. xvii). Students identify three to five values they live hold and aim to live by. These become their personal creed. After establishing their personal creeds, students consider how they want to make a difference in the future. To develop their creed, students complete a series of guided reflection journals. First, the students explore the various influences that shape them. Next, they reflect on their previous lists, and make a short list of their most import influences. After reflecting on their most valued influences, the students write a reflective paper where they draft their creed statement defending the statement with examples from their most important influences (Creger, 2015). By reflecting on the past and exploring the future, students see how “facts, meanings, and values” relate to their learning.

**Discourse Communities.** In addition to personal writing, composition teachers need to provide students with the skills required for successful academic discourse. Bartholomae (2008) says that, when students write, they have to learn “the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (p. 3). He concedes that the academy consists of a variety of sub-communities, but maintains the students have to learn how to carryout oral and written discussion within the context of higher education. Graff (2008) argues that academics make the process of enculturation more challenging for students by “making its ideas, problems, and ways of thinking look more opaque, narrowly specialize, and beyond normal learning capacities than they are or need to be” (p. 33). Higher education makes their culture and ideas opaque for new members, and then expects students to understand how the system

operates without explaining the skills that will help them succeed. Graff argues that students need to understand how academics talk because the language use becomes part of the community.

Students cannot join the discourse community unless they understand its features. Swales (2014) discusses the importance of understanding the characteristics of a discourse community in order to analyze how the community uses discourse practices. He defines discourse communities as containing six characteristics: shared goals that are publically available, communal ways for members to communicate, clear methods for participation, communication genres, group particular lexis, and expert as well as novice members. Swales concedes that his definition is rather utopian in that it ignores many factors that complicate group membership, but it offers a starting place for exploring a community's features. Wardle (2014) uses activity system theory to suggest that in order for people to function well in new communities, they need to learn how the community functions. Students who will be entering new discourse communities as they go through school and then enter the workforce can benefit from exploring "the ways in which writing is bound up with issues of identity and authority" within the communities they hope to join (p. 285).

**Argumentation.** Graff (2008) asserts that "summarizing and making arguments is the name of the game in academia" and necessary for students to be successful in college (p. 34). Scholarly arguments are research based "means for advancing a conversation" using evidence to support claims in order to persuade an audience (Green, 2008, p. 29). As students become members of an academic

discourse community, they will be expected to enter the conversation and know the appropriate means of supporting their claims. A good way to help students learn how to develop a point of view and enter the conversation is through inquiry (Hillocks, 1995). To develop scholarly argumentation skills, students need to conceptualize an argument as more than a two-sided debate. A more useful way to conceive of argumentation is to teach argumentation as “agonistic inquiry” which is “a process in which people struggle over interpretations together, deliberate on the nature of the issues that face them, and articulate and rearticulate their positions in history, culture, and circumstances” (Lynch, George, & Cooper, 1997, p. 63). This conception of argumentation is useful when argumentation is seen as a means of creating action in the world. If we perceive argument as a necessary step in transformation, it creates a purpose for argumentative writing beyond winning. Lynch, George, and Cooper (1997) claim argumentation requires openness to alternative perspectives and an ability to initiate change through the dialogic process. In order to change perspectives, it is necessary to understand different perspectives. A useful way to see different perspectives is to begin with a question about an issue and research answers from a variety of perspectives. This method can help develop more sophisticated perspectives and lead to more informed discussions. The authors argue that to engage in true intellectual inquiry in the classroom, teachers need to reconceive argumentation as “not just as a matter of winning or losing but as a way to connect with others which may lead to change, not only in the world but also in ourselves”(Lynch, George, & Cooper, 1997, p. 84)

**Course themes to engage students in discussion.** Sponenberg (2012)

discusses how course themes can be used to engage or shut down critical thinking. She argues, “if a course theme engenders any student resistance to, or hesitation about, the public spiritedness that guides it, that theme can potentially hinder their development as writers” (p. 544). When Sponenberg used politicized topics, the students could come to understand differing perspectives. They could also examine the ideas and forces shaping their new college communities. But, writing politically charged papers required challenges beyond those required to write with “clarity, cohesion and scholarly citation,” especially if the students actively resisted the perspectives and ideas in the texts being read (p. 545). When themes are too politicized or controversial, resistant students may critically disengage from the topic. Sponenberg says these disengaged students may write with clarity and cohesion, but the ideas and argument may not be compelling. Student writing from such topics can result in too much caution and a fear of expressing true stances out of worry about ‘saying the wrong thing’ (p. 546). Controversial topics can also cause issues during peer review because students may feel reluctant to share their writing out of concern for potential ideological conflict with their peers. As a result of these concerns, discussions and papers often “fell short of complex critical engagement” (p. 546). While these course themes are promising for intellectual engagement, the development of discussion and writing skills may pay the price.

First-year students may not be ready to publicly address controversial issues in a place at a time where they are struggling to establish their own identities and place. Sponenberg advocates instead for a course theme that foster engagement

using “provocative, but not directly ideological, readings” (p. 546). One benefit of provocative reading is that when students write about explicitly political texts, their writings tend to be reactions to the ideas as opposed to thoughtful engagements with the ideas in the text. The students can “see” the details and style in a text more easily when the issues don’t evoke a visceral response. When the course theme allows for exploration of complex ideas without forcing a political battleground, students are more likely to engage in “comfortable and confident” class discussions. Furthermore, the students feel empowered in their writing to “test out their larger, more sophisticated ideas” (p. 549) in both low stakes and high stakes assignments.

### **Dialogic Teaching Strategies**

One way to develop critical thinkers is through the use of dialogic instruction (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). When teaching dialogically, dialogue is used as a way to help students confront understandings, misconceptions, and to create new meanings. Dialogic instruction encompasses a wide range of practices including modeling, asking probing questions during whole group lessons that encourage an in depth exploration, inviting students to share knowledge development during small group endeavors, and peer-review groups and discussion during writing. In fact, “any instructional practice can become dialogic when multiple student voices are included in the creation of what counts as knowledge in the classroom through discourse processes that include both conflict and agreement” (Caughlin et al., 2013, p. 217). To create an effective language learning environment, teachers do not begin with content. Instead they consider “what are



good and useful and powerful experiences for people to have” (Gee, 2004, p. 118) in the context of the skills and knowledge desired and the kinds of thinking being developed. Dialogic teaching should be structured around experiences that are useful for developing the specific skills that are important within the specific content and environment. Instead of thinking of dialogic instruction as just question asking or discussion, dialogue should be seen as a key way to develop critical thinking and critique. Critical thinking has been defined in diverse ways (Halx & Reybold, 2005), but consistently critical thinking is characterized as being metacognitive, “purposeful, reasoned, and goal-directed thinking” that is situated in “a heightened awareness of multiple points of view and context” (pp. 294–295). To think critically implies the ability to recognize multiplicities and understand the ways that context influences meaning.

Dialogue can’t exist without critical thinking because critical thinking helps learners perceive the schisms that exist between powers of oppression and the oppressed, and see that reality is not static but constantly changing and that they can play a role in shaping the transformation. This view also dramatically reshaped educational practices. Teachers are no longer sages on stages but partners in conversation. Learning becomes collaborative, a joint process using dialogue grow and learn. Instead, “people teach each other, mediated by the world” (Freire, 2014, p. 80). Dialogue seen this way is an epistemological stance as opposed to a tactic for engaging students. The focus is on how discourse functions to transform understanding (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). Dialogue as epistemology is a way of knowing where discourse works as interpretative strategies (Anagnostopoulous et

al., 2008). Dialogic talk functions to engage student voices and perspectives in the service of supporting intellectual growth and activity (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). In this understanding, dialogue generates meaning making, encourages metacognition, and supports collaboration.

Although there are many ways into make the move into dialogic teaching, small group discussions and activities can be invaluable. Gee (2004) found that when students interact with adults and others they perceive as being far more advanced, the students do learn to use language to explore different perspectives, but they may not dig deep into the alternate views or compare them to their own. Peer discussions are requisite for students to deeply consider, reason through, and reflect on different views. Authority figures can cause them to defer and not stand up for or thoroughly consider their own views.

Questioning can be used to enhance and support dialogic instruction when questions are authentic and used to create opportunities for further inquiry and discussion (Caughlan, et al, 2013). Used effectively, questioning engages critical thinking (Crowe & Stanford, 2010) by reconfiguring and restructuring knowledge in new forms. Questions with one correct answer are not dialogic in nature. To be dialogic, “good questions problematize and open up knowledge to thinking” (Boyd & Markarian, 2015, p. 277). These questions require cognitive reprocessing help students see relationships and generalize learning. Effective, dialogic questioning “is contingent on student contributions and positions the student for further exploration and articulation” (Boyd & Markarian, 2015, p. 277). When teachers respond to student questions, they can recognize student additions by working

student words into the next question thereby moving the classroom discourse toward dialogic. In short, the function of dialogic questioning is to encourage further thinking and knowledge inquiry.

**Dialogic writing instruction.** Dialogic instruction during composition instruction emphasizes how orality and language interact. Ong (2001) discusses how humans evolved as oral creatures who developed writing as a tool, but since it is alien to our psyche, writing can be divisive as we learn to use it well, but it also “intensifies the sense of self and fosters more conscious interactions between persons. Writing is consciousness-raising” (Ong, 2001, p. 179). Dialogic instruction can help students reconnect the oral self to the writer as they talk through their composition processes. Emerson said that “good writing and brilliant discourse are perpetual allegories” (qtd. in Richardson, 2009, p. 61). Both oral and written forms of expression serve to create metaphors for reality, and discourse can help students engage with personal experiences in a way that can build good writing that combines “the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation” (p. 61). Discourse can help students blend their experiences, and engage thoughts with words in a new way. Emerson asserts “strict conversation with a friend is the magazine out of which all good writing is drawn” (p. 46). Dialogic teaching can activate the kind of conversation needed to draw out good writing. Elbow (2012) holds that speech can help students understand how speech and writing relate. He proposes that students use “unplanned speech” such as free writing to compose to help language flow naturally on the page. Another oral practice that works dialogically to produce better writing is reading aloud

during peer review, which engages the power of the ear to create strong and clear language while also receiving feedback from a peer. Speaking out writing and discussing writing with peers provides “constant practice in suiting our words to an audience” (p. 67).

**Modeling.** Gee (2004) believes that models provide powerful learning opportunities. He describes a learning process where “masters model behavior” and skills the students need to learn while describing the key aspects. Then learners collaborate with the masters, who work to scaffold student understanding through the discussion. Throughout the process texts and other artifacts are available to enhance learning. Students also receive feedback on behaviors and skills as they learn. Finally, students achieve a degree of mastery and feel as if they have gained membership in the learning culture. This process describes more than modeling, but it shows how modeling can be used to scaffold learning through a gradual release of ownership.

Bunn (2013) conducted a qualitative research study to explore ways instructors “theorize and teach reading in composition courses and to better understand how students perceive and respond to assigned course reading” (p. 499). Bunn sent an online survey to 57 first-year writing teachers and then conducted follow up interviews and observations with selected participants. The students in observed courses were given surveys about the course’s reading. The majority of instructors surveyed reported, “that they conceptualize reading and writing as connected activities” (p. 501), but they don’t all explicitly teach the connections to their students. One instructor who was surveyed said they believe teachers make

assumptions that the students will understand the connections. The instructor went on to say “if instructors explicitly teach reading and writing and connected activities, students are more likely to complete assigned reading because they recognize its value in relation to the rest of the course” (p. 503). When the instructor’s students were surveyed, the students who saw a connection replied they were motivated to read, while those who did not see the connection were not. Guthrie and Wigfield say, “a person reads a word or comprehends a text not only because she can do it, but because she is motivated to do it” (as cited in Bunn, 2015, p. 505). Instructors can help build motivation by clearly discussing the connections: “if instructors explicitly teach reading and writing as connected activities rather than assuming that students will identify such connections on their own, students stand a far better chance of recognizing how assigned course reading relates to and can help them with their writing tasks” (p. 505).

Model texts are a good strategy for teaching connections between reading and writing. This strategy depicts reading as a way to understanding writing itself as opposed to reading as content. The instructors who mention model texts “describe using model texts to demonstrate strategies and structural techniques that students can adopt in their own writing” (Bunn, 2015, p. 506). Students need to be shown how to read the texts as models because they may not see the connections on their own. Smargorinsky (1992) warns, “Simply reading a model piece of writing...is insufficient to teach young writers how to produce composition...most novices need more direct instruction” (p. 174). To be effective, students need instruction on how to read models for strategies and genre conventions.

**Self-assessment.** To encourage students to reflect on and assess their work, reflection needs to become part of the curriculum and teachers need to value these activities. Teachers first need to explain their expectations and dialogue with the students “about their texts, about how they wrote them, about how they read them, about how we value them” (Yancey, 1998, p. 14). It is the teacher’s job to “help students develop language that makes such a dialogue possible; specifying our expectations is one means of achieving that” (p. 14). Yancey created a four-part schema to help direct students through the assessment process. Self-knowledge: the students’ understanding of their writing practices, their writing processes, and how the topic relates to the writer on a personal level; Knowledge of the content: the students learning about the topic itself through writing, knowledge that may not have made it into the final draft; Task knowledge: the students understanding of the task of writing, writing strategies that match a specific purpose, the role of audience, the relationship between rhetorical situation and the purpose; Judgment: students’ evaluation of their work, their determination of what work is best and why, their assessment of the weaknesses in their work.

Judgment is appropriate in writing classes as a way for helping writers better understand themselves as writers and better understand their work. To judge, they have to become familiar with their writing and then decide what they like best. This means they are asked to like something they wrote, which can be challenging for developing writers, but useful for teaching them to invest in their writing. Judgment also requires critique, and then revision based on that evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses. Teachers need to thoughtfully construct questions in a

way that invites dialogue with students and further consideration of their texts. Then, teachers need to cultivate self-assessment by incorporating it into the formal assessment process. This can be done through informal discussions with students, assessment guides in portfolios, and even in student grades. Yancey (1998) concludes, “self assessment can, I think, bring summative and formative, external and internal together; it can collapse those boundaries and make learning real by bringing author and reader together in informed and informing ways” (p. 17).

**Student writing concerns.** Students struggle to develop their identities as writers because “for most people, the process of writing has gotten all tangled up with being judged—judged for wrong language and imprecise thinking” (Elbow, 2012, p. 325). When students worry that their words will be judged as faulty, they become hesitant to express themselves. This concern is exacerbated when teachers hold students to exacting academic standards that professional writers do not actually follow. Elbow argues “The tacit assumption here is what I call ‘the Picasso principle’: you aren’t allowed to draw funny looking bulls till you learn to draw proper looking bulls” (p. 346). Writers in *The Atlantic* and other professional writing venues “draw funny looking bulls” with their words, but students often feel that only “real writers,” meaning professional writers, can break the rules. Ralph Waldo Emerson holds that good writing should be accessible to the average person because everyone possesses reason “to illuminate all his life his social, political, religious actions” (qtd in Richardson, 2009, p. 46).

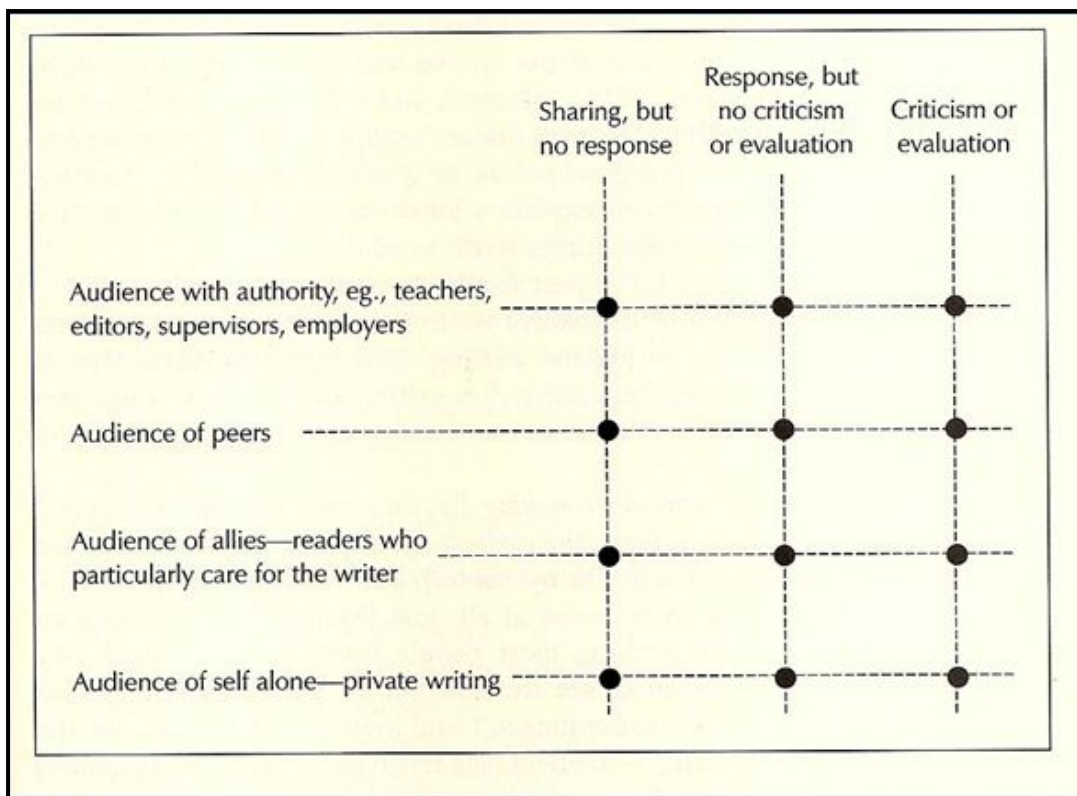


Figure 2. Elbow's Map of Audience and Response.

***Audience and response in writing.*** Elbow (2000) says that most writers are influenced in their experiences with writing by the intended audience and type of response. Students need experience with a variety of types of audiences and response for their writing to grow and flourish. Yet, in many writing classes, students only experience writing for a teacher where they expect to be evaluated. Elbow's map of writing and response (see Figure 2) is a useful way to think about the "intersections" between the kinds of audiences students have and the kind of responses they make (p. 29). Thinking through the kinds of audiences students write to as well as how teachers give responses can be useful for creating a



classroom climate that invites students to write more, and even, feel more comfortable sharing.

**Elbow's map.** There are three types of responses from left to right on the map:

- Sharing, but no response—Sharing your writing with a reader, or group, wherein in no response is given beyond a “thank you for sharing.” This is useful because the writer gets to hear how their words sound when read aloud. This can help them see places they might want to revise on their own.
- Response, but no evaluation—Responses that look at what the writing is doing. These responses ask about the student’s ideas, goals, or describe features. Reader shares their view on the topic, not judging the quality of the writing. The goal is to ensure writers “have been heard and understood” (p. 31). Elbow says this is valuable because we all want to be understood and this encourages further sharing.
- Evaluative response—Responses where students expect to be criticized or judged for their writing.

In a classroom setting, there are four types of audiences:

- Audience with authority over writer—This includes teachers and other authority figures. Students do need to write to teachers, but if they only write for teachers, they tend to associate writing with a grade instead of as a means of communicating.

- Audience of peers—Peer readers can be useful for helping the writer experience writing as communication. Students care what their peers think, and this audience can help the writer strive to communicate clearly.
- Audience of allies—Readers who care, such as friends and family members. This can be useful for a writer because the relationship invites an atmosphere where the reader genuinely wants to help the writer and the writer will hear the reader because of the knowledge that the reader cares.
- Audience of self—Private writing where you write not expecting to share with anyone else. This allows the writer freedom to express their thoughts and feelings without pressure. The writer can focus on their thoughts and ideas instead of error avoidance. It also builds an association that writing can be a safe space for expressing yourself.

Elbow believes that the shape of the map from no response to critical and from the bottom, with no audience, to the authority “implies starting off a course with writing only for sharing and only for the self” (p. 41). Students struggle at times to understand why they should engage in private writing in school, so if teachers offer supportive audiences without judgment first, it helps students move into the other areas. Students need to take risks to grow as thinkers and writers, but “the best way to help people take risks is to build a foundation of safety” (Elbow, 2000, p. 41). Elbow “jump starts” his writing classes with a few weeks of writing only to share, no response, and private writing. Students will write more this way, and feel more comfortable writing.

**Peer review.** Peer review is often described as best practice in writing, and one that works well with other dialogic teaching methods including self-assessment. In fact, “multiple studies have shown that peer review leads to improvements in students’ writing and increased understanding of the expectations and genres of academic writing” (Loretto, DeMartino, & Godley, 2016, p. 134). Among the benefits attributed to peer review are student ownership of their writing and increased audience awareness. To better understand how students themselves perceive peer review, Loretto, DeMartino, and Godley (2016) conducted a survey of 513 high school students’ perceptions of an online peer review program called SWoRD (Scaffolded Writing and Reviewing in the Disciplines). Quantitative and qualitative data analysis was used. The findings reveal that students view peer review as beneficial, especially the ability to receive feedback from multiple people, getting anonymous feedback, and opportunities to also review other students’ work as well. Students also appreciated the chance to grow by reading the writing of others. The students believed that peer review helped them improve their writing and that learning through peer review helped them see their weaknesses as writers. The students did express some concern with the specificity of the feedback, or felt it was hard to fix their writing when the reviewer wasn’t sure exactly how to correct the issue. The students also mentioned that they were not sure how to handle advice that was contradictory.

Simmons (2003) worked with senior English teachers and freshman composition teachers at both two and four year colleges. The teachers developed common writing assignments and common assessments. Then each high school

class was paired with a college class. The participating classes completed two common writing assignments a semester. The participants posted their work on a webpage, and on the webpage responded to writings from their partner school. In addition, each class received peer feedback in their own classroom. The study found that students needed to be taught how to provide effective peer review, and the skills needed to be reinforced over time. The high school classes entered the study with a range of experience in providing peer review. The students who entered the study with the most experience in peer review were the most effective reviewers. The experienced peer reviewers commented on strategies writers use to communicate along with comments that help a writer better communicate with the reader. It is important, however, to teach students to see peer review as more than error correction. Otherwise, no matter how long the students have engaged in peer review, they will only edit their peers' work.

After three years of working with high school and college writing classes to improve college writing through improving preparing during high school, Simmons (2003) concluded, "students need to practice reading one another's work while giving and receiving feedback before they do more than edit or offer global praise" (p. 684). During writing workshops, students need to be explicitly shown how to provide feedback that is more than line editing. Writing workshops need to be structured to teach students to see revision as more than editing. Students need to practice peer review in class regularly, discuss models in class, and discuss feedback with teachers. Students who were taught and practiced peer review on a regular basis "told outside evaluators that they had learned to be better evaluators

of peer writing and, in the process, had improved as writers themselves. In fact, writers who used peer feedback earned higher scores on their writing” (p. 692).

**Blogging as dialogic instruction in FYC.** It is hard to argue against the idea that technology is transforming education in the United States. Selfe (1999) says, “technology is now inextricably linked to literacy and literacy education in this country” and argues that teachers need to cultivate its potential to improve education and reduce inequity. Gee (2000) adds that new technologies could lead to more equal access to high level discourses and increase student success with dealing with complicated issues and ideas. The technology also could lead to innovations in teaching and learning. and learning. Gee insists that all the new technological changes are “creating new ways with words, new literacies, and new forms of learning” (p. 43).

Loncar, Bennett, and Liu’s (2014) phenomenological review focuses on online discussion forums and discusses some of the ways students conduct discussions in online environments. The authors found that online forums “promote interaction and complex thinking that is not always effective in traditional face-to-face learning situations” (p. 94). The fact that the discussions take class outside of a physical environment “not only extends knowledge construction from the classroom but also provides students with the time and space to work with, explore, and critically discuss topics by interacting and building interactive online communities” (Loncar, Bennet, & Liu, 2014, p. 94). The authors say that smaller discussion groups and Socratic dialogues increase the efficacy of discussion forums and encourage critical thinking, but it helps if the instructor is

actively involved. Teacher moderation and input during discussions was also found to be useful. If student moderators are used, students need to be told the importance of asking questions and sharing personal opinions in order for a discussion to develop productively. Problem solving scenarios can also be useful for fostering high-level discussions. They also believe that current research indicates that online forums could have potential to build a classroom community.

The social media explosion has made writing and reading more of a collaborative activity. People can comment on and discuss online reading and write posts that inspire discussion. Most online communication provides opportunities for interaction thus blurring the line between writer and reader so that communications become more defined by interactions between writer/ readers (Griffith & Minter, 2013). In the online classroom environment, “productive technologically mediated writing communities are certainly possible with careful planning, pedagogical expertise, and good institutional support” (p. 145). These environments can help with at risk students who may not be able to consistently attend class. However, online environments, including blogs can present problems if the students struggle with computer access issues. Additionally, teachers need to be mindful that many students struggle to adapt to online learning environments (Griffith & Minter, 2013).

For new college students, like the majority of the students in FYC, it is useful to remember that change creates insecurity, and the shift to college learning presents a huge change. (Smith, 2008). Instructors who are trying to engage the students and build an inviting learning environment need to recognize how the

students' new position creates a particular challenge. Smith (2008) asks teachers to consider,

How do we negotiate the tension between making students feel a comfortable sense of belonging in college and challenging them: getting them outside their comfort zones to a place where they test out new ideas, take risks, ask questions, voice opinions, and interact with people in new ways? (p. 38)

She holds that 21<sup>st</sup> century students are digital natives and feel more comfortable engaging with reading and writing online, and that blogs can create a comfortable space for the students to take risks. Blogs work well in a classroom setting. They promote freer expression, allow authors to develop their own voice, and “encourage interactive communication” (p. 40). Because students tend to be more comfortable with writing in electronic spaces, this can empower fledgling writers. This can be helpful for first year students who keep being confronted with new academic language and writing that makes them feel that the world they have entered is foreign and “not really meant for them” (p. 46), especially if they are non-traditional, ELL, or first generation students.

Reid (2011) refers to the theory discussed by Malcolm Gladwell that it takes 10,000 hours to become an expert (Ericsson, Krampe, & Clemens, 1993). Reid states that over the course of a four-year college career, students only write 1000 hours, thereby falling far short of the requisite hours. Reid proposes that blogging can be a beneficial to grow writing skills. He argues that as opposed to traditional classroom writing that is structured by the instructor “on a blog, however, you control the subject matter, the length, the format, the timing of your posts, and all the other characteristics of your writing. You establish your own

goals” (Reid, 2011, p. 303). Class blogs can build a sense of community by creating a space for written expression that is less formal and lower stakes. The students may feel more comfortable experimenting with different styles and forms (Smith, 2008).



## Chapter 3. Methods

### Research Design

Action research, unlike most traditional research in the social sciences, requires intervention as part of the process. In general, action research involves: a plan to improve; implementation of the plan; observation of the effects of the intervention; and reflection in order to

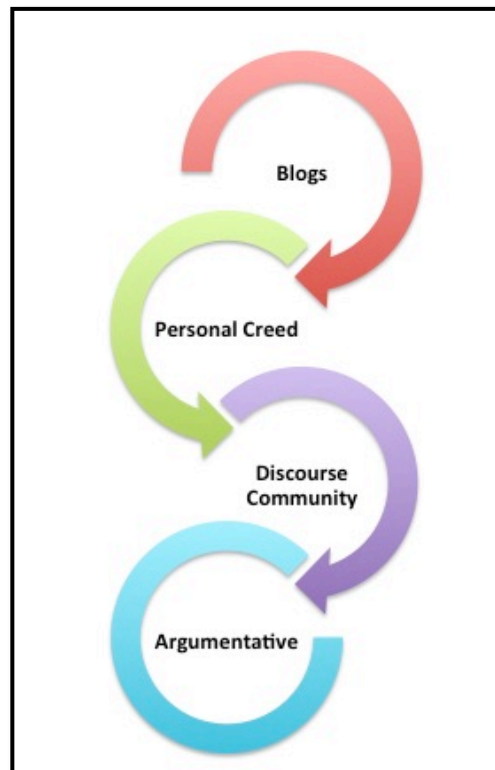
plan, act, and observe again (Herr & Anderson, 2015; Hendricks, 2013; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). This research “spiral” is characteristic of much of action research. Action research does not have an end. “Rather it is an unending reflective process that is graphically displayed in the shape of a spiral with each systematic step leading to the next step and continually

beginning anew” (Hendricks, 2013, p. 10).

Because of the spiraling nature of action

research, the methodology also evolves throughout the process. Figure 3 shows

how the study spiraled through the major units in the course. Through each spiral, I sought to understand:



*Figure 3.* The action research spiral through the course units.

To what extent can critical literacy, as taught through the dialogic in a rural setting, influence:

- the quality of student discussion?
- students' writing practices?
- Students' ability to critical think and reflect on their own learning?

In each cycle, I used my research questions and results from prior units to set goals for the unit, selected interventions and assessments that would help me answer my research questions. In order to construct a thick, rich narrative and to establish credibility through triangulation, the study involved multiple sources of data that allowed the triangulation of findings and adjustment interventions as necessary (Hendricks, 2013).

Using first-person critical reflective action research as a methodology, I used a variety of methods to answer my research questions. I conducted a self-study to help me understand how teaching through the dialogic can help students embody critical thinking through their writing. I also wanted to explore how these practices might influence student writing. The goal was to improve my practice, and transform how critical literacy and the dialogic are used in my classroom to create embodied critical thinkers. Throughout the study I used the insider perspective in tandem with “the scope, knowledge base, and rigor of academic research” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 45). This perspective provided a unique insider perspective on how critical literacy taught through the dialogic works in practice.

The insider perspective presented some unique challenges. Insider action researchers “need to build on the closeness they have with the setting, while at the same time create distance from it in order to see things critically and enable change to happen” (Coghlan & Shani, 2016, p. 49). This required that I interrogated my preconceived notions “about the subject being studied and the system within they are conducting the study. In order to do this, I also had to recognize the duality of my role as teacher and researcher. In first person research, this requires the researcher “holding and valuing both sets of roles simultaneously and catching internal responses to conflicting demands and dealing with them. A continuous examination of the role conflict and dynamics seems to characterize the nature of the issues that the insider action research struggles with as the role duality evolves” (p. 50). As a first person researcher, I also needed to “act politically within the values of action research” (p. 50), a process that entailed reflection on individual values and how those values work within the system. “The praxis-reflection methodology involves attention to and reflection on the personal questions and dilemmas which arise in the political dynamics of the action research projects” (p. 51) Knowing that these challenges are not static, I also recognized how my deliberate actions could change me as a researcher and as a teacher within my system.

**The FYC Program.** The Freshman Composition program at the university aims to teach students to critically think and communicate effectively. Through two required general education writing courses, English 1113/1213, the English department strives to “build on students' abilities, helping them become capable

writers and critical readers across a wide spectrum of educational and professional settings” (ECU Composition Philosophy). To ensure all students get the attention needed to cultivate these skills, each section of Freshman Composition is capped at 22 students.

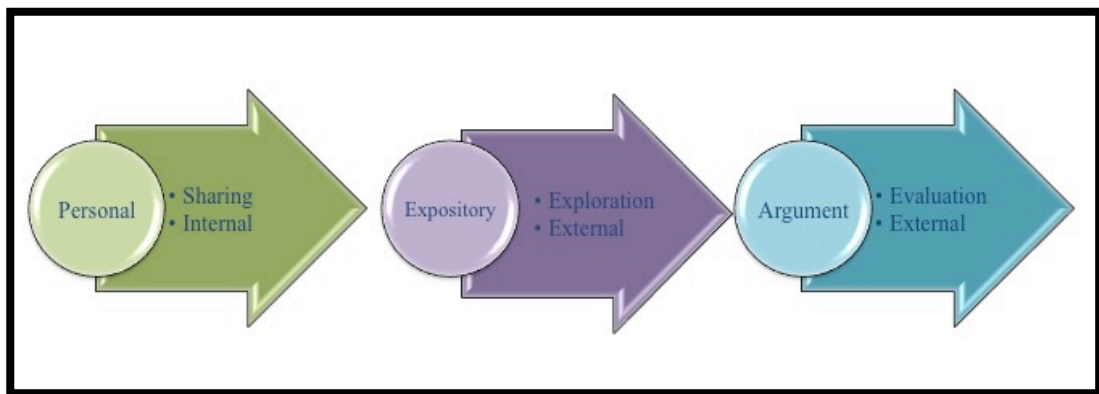
The students in the study are enrolled in the first course, English 1113, a course that “helps students identify and cultivate abilities that will prove useful in a variety of discourse communities” (ECU Composition Philosophy). In particular, students acquire rhetorical and procedural knowledge. Rhetorical knowledge teaches students to analyze the relationship between reader, writer, and the message being conveyed. This allows the students “to craft texts that will most effectively advance their specific aims with respect to their intended audience.” This knowledge is supported by procedural knowledge, which include the techniques and strategies for turning ideas into an effective, written message.

**My FYC Classes.** Our course theme was “How can we be architects of our own success?” As a class, we read Malcolm Gladwell’s *Outliers*, a book that “presents a fascinating and provocative blueprint for making the most of human potential” (Book Jacket) by exploring the myriad of factors that contribute to success. The class discussed how these ideas impacted our lives and ideas of success. This theme was chosen for its potential to evoke student engagement with ideas using a text that is “provocative, but not directly ideological” (Sponenberg, 2012, p. 546). My hope was that the text choice would provoke thoughtful discussion and response and empower students to try and explore complex ideas. In class, we used writing to explore students’ core values and truths, the forces and

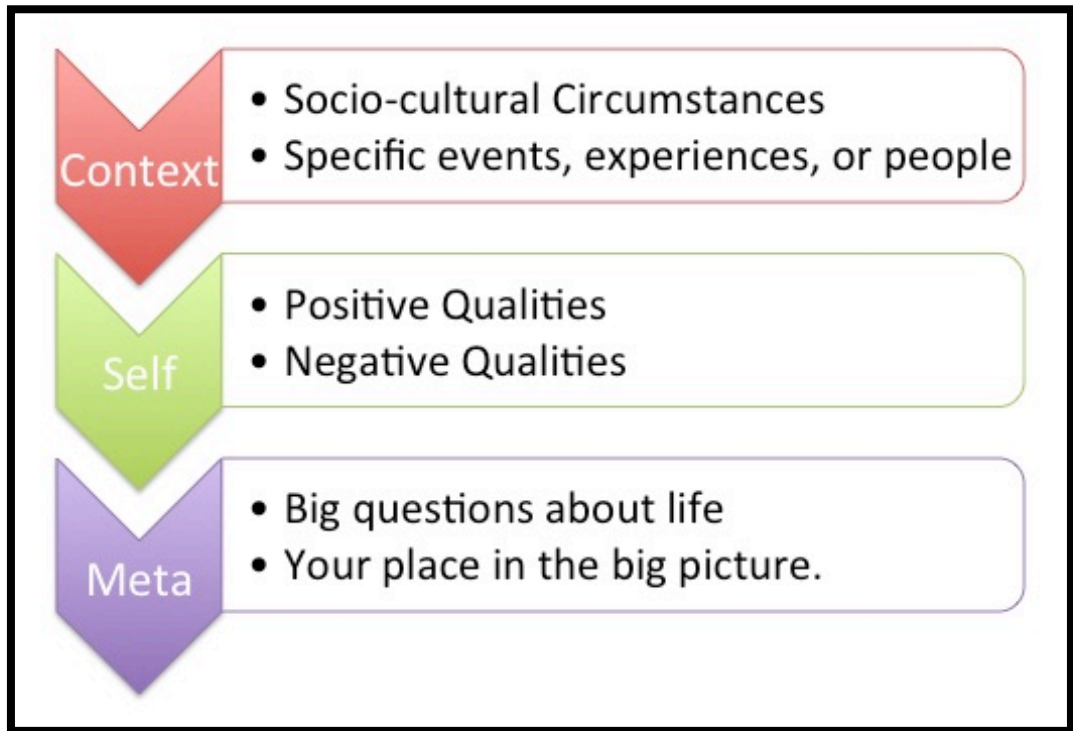
ideas that shape identity, and used these explorations to help students determine who they would like to be. Because critical thinking and reflection are necessary for learning, reflection on writing practices and beliefs were also key components of the course. Discussion was the central means through which the students interact with the text. Because I aimed to develop students' abilities to engage in critical discussion and reflection about writing, our final assessment was a portfolio with a writing reflection.

The course was broken down into three major units: personal writing, expository writing, and argumentative writing. Each project was chosen for its potential to engage students while teaching important skills. I made the decision to move from personal to expository to argumentative writing after studying Elbow's (2000) consideration of audience and response (Figure 1). Elbow says the map is helpful for considering relationship between the audiences students write to and the kinds of responses they create. At the top of the types of audiences are audiences with authority over the writer. Written summative projects are almost always written to an audience with authority. To help mitigate the potential emotional stress of writing to authority, I "mapped" out the summative writing projects aligning each to a type of response (Figure 4). Elbow's lowest pressure type of response is "sharing, but no response." To mimic the feel of a writing assignment the invited sharing by the writer, I began the semester with a personal writing unit. The second level is "response, but no evaluation." Therefore, the second writing unit was an expository unit where they can "share their views on the topic" with the primary goal being to describe and analyze a discourse community they would like

to join. Elbow’s third level of response is “evaluative response,” and in the final unit the students’ have to develop an argument. This felt appropriate because writing an argument invites critique. An argument is a type of writing where “students expect to be criticized or judged,” because of how the topic is presented.



*Figure 4. Map of Writing Genres*



*Figure 5.* The creed journal reflection steps

The personal writing unit was based on John Creger’s (2004) award winning Personal Creed project. The project uses personal writing as a way for students to “reflect on how the facts, meanings, and values of their lives can become interrelated, interdependent phases of their learning” (p. 53). Students conducted a series of formative writing reflections that began by exploring socio-cultural circumstances, then important people & events. After exploring how contextual factors influenced them, the students reflected on internal factors and how internal qualities, both positive and negative, shaped them. Finally, the students reflected on “big questions” such as, “What is the purpose of life?” and “What is your role in the universe?” (see Figure 5). The students used these

reflective journals to write a summative personal creed paper. A personal creed is a statement describing what you value and how these values reflect your identity as a person. The students wrote 3-4 page reflective papers containing their personal creed statement, specific examples from their life that illustrate why their creed matters, a goal for the future, and an analysis of how the statement of who they are and what they believe will contribute to their success as a college student (Appendix A).

My aim in assigning this project was to help students reconnect with the “embodied experiences” in their lives (Banks, 2003, p. 22) and better understand how their experiences have influenced their identities and how they act in and experience the world. My hope was that beginning with self-exploration would lead to “cognitive shifts” and more thoughtful writing and deeper discussions. Although I kept the spirit of Creger’s project intact, I adapted the project for FYC students and also integrated the course theme. One way I adapted the project was by adding a formative literacy narrative to “shed light on literacy” and to get students to think about how language events shaped their lives and identities (Smith, 2015, p. 116). Throughout the project, I also integrated literacy related questions to foster reflection on the “intricate webs” created by literacy in each of their lives (Mapes, 2016, p. 689). Because the course theme asked students to explore their own role in the achievement of goals, it became naturally integrated into the project.



After asking the class to analyze past experiences, the course focused on the students' future success. In *Outliers*, Gladwell explores the ways in which a person's environment, including community, shapes a person's success. The expository unit paper asked students to study a discourse community to which they currently belong or one they would like to join. The students were welcome to study any community but were encouraged to explore a community that could play an important role in their future (such as a work community or a club/ organization related to their major). I adapted this assignment from Wardle and Dowd (2014) discourse community assignment and a colleague's course sheet. Students explored aspects of membership in the community such as communication practices, membership, and ways to obtain power within the community. Students researched the community and wrote an essay analyzing what it means to be a member of that community (Appendix B). Prakash and Waks (1985) wrote that it is beneficial for students to move out of the schools into the community so that learners can understand social problems requiring public attention. This helps students wrest free from confining institutional pedagogy. Experiential education grounded in the community can help students understand where society is now, and how it might be transformed in the future.

To help students to learn academic discourse and argumentation, the next unit focused on argumentation. The ability to persuade is essential for success in college (Graff, 2008) Knowing this, the persuasive paper asked students to apply research skills developed throughout the course to analyze an arguable topic and form a position. I incorporated the course theme into the argumentative unit using

the 10,000 hour rule Gladwell discusses in *Outliers*. In *Outliers*, Gladwell cites a study by Ericsson, Krampe and Clemens (1993) that argues that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become an expert in a field. As students begin college, they should strive to build these hours in their chosen field of study. Therefore, for this paper students chose an arguable topic related to their chosen major, researched the topic in order to develop an informed opinion, and then argued this opinion using research as support (Appendix C). Argumentation was taught in a way that supported the course focus on dialogue as a means of creating action in the world. This vision of argumentation requires the ability to see things from a different perspective and have dialogue with opposing views (Lynch, George, & Cooper, 1997).

To evoke technology's potential to cultivate high-level discourse, students wrote, read, and discussed blog posts during their online class time. My goal was to engage lively discussion, to cultivate a sense of community, and to create a safe space for the students to take risks (Smith, 2008). During the course, the students were responsible for writing two blog posts related to our study of *Outliers*. Throughout *Outliers*, Gladwell explores ideas of success and the characteristics of successful people. Through blogging students explored concepts introduced by Gladwell. They were be given four choices as inspiration but were welcome to propose additional topics. The four topics listed below were developed originally by colleague in the English department as essay topics over *Outliers* and then adapted and modified by me for use as blog posts:

1. For this blog, you will work to define an abstract concept that has many meanings for different people: success. Refrain from relying on a dictionary definition in your essay. While dictionaries are useful tools, they offer limited information that doesn't fully capture the complexity and nuance you can offer through your own critically thinking.
2. For this blog, you will analyze your own 'outlier'. To do this, you will select a specific person you consider successful and write a profile that analyzes the factors that lead to his or her success. Then consider why you hold that opinion.
3. Gladwell uses the word "entitlement" to highlight the difference in Christopher Langan's and Robert Oppenheimer's interactions with authority figures. In this post, explore the concept of "entitlement" in a unique way.
4. We are concerned this semester with understanding the factors that contribute to a person's success. With that in mind, consider one of the ideas Gladwell discusses—meritocracy, the 10,000-hour rule, the Matthew Effect, practical intelligence—you have many options. Then, use this idea as a lens to explore an aspect of success.

Every student signed up for two weeks as blogger. On the chosen weeks, the bloggers were responsible for posting blogs by Friday night at 11:59 p.m., and then for monitoring the discussion board comments over the weekend. As part of this assignment, on the weeks students were not blogging, they discussed their classmates' blog posts (Appendix D). I also monitored the discussion boards to

actively encourage critical discussion. In order to ensure effective discussion, criteria for effective posts and discussions were explicitly taught in class prior to beginning blogging (Loncar, Bennett, & Liu, 2014).

**Final portfolio.** The final exam for the class was a portfolio project consisting of three parts. 1) Copies of the students original and revised drafts of their major papers; 2) A significantly revised draft of one major paper (they were asked to choose one paper they enjoyed writing to continue developing); 3) A reflection paper discussing their growth as a writer over the semester (Appendix E). A portfolio was chosen because it reflects the writing process and encourages a growth model of writing. The message a portfolio sends to the students is that “thinking and writing are enhanced by conversations with peers and teachers—and that first responses, although valid, need not be final ones” (Elbow, 2000, p. 432). This evaluation method matches my epistemological beliefs and my goals for the class in that the portfolio was designed to encourage reflection and discussion (Yancey, 1998).

### **Participants and Sampling**

The overarching goal was to understand how beliefs and practices related to the development of critical literacy through the dialogic. Therefore, I was the primary participant in the study, and as such, I position myself as an insider researcher who studied my own practice in order to transform it. I established this position carefully, recognizing that I needed to carefully work to ensure that I determined ways to separate the study of myself and my practice, acknowledging it is a false paradigm to think that I could ethically study myself as a means of

looking at programmatic success. The aim instead was to study myself so that I can use the findings to develop future collaborative participatory action research projects (Herr & Anderson, 2015). I established this aim keeping in mind that “while one’s practice cannot be separated from the setting within it takes place, a focus on one’s own practice versus the actions initiated within the setting is an important conceptual distinction” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 41). I used this conceptual distinction to set up how data sources were selected, used, and analyzed (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Whitehead, 2016; McNiff & Whitehead, 2002).

**Recruitment.** To thoroughly explore the topic using multiple data sources, my students were also participants. The students as participants allowed the examination of the work in practice using discussions and artifacts. All students who enrolled in the class were eligible to be participants. Whenever positions of power are not equitable, coercion can be a concern. To alleviate concerns that my students felt pressured to join the study, I asked another professor in the English department to explain the study and distribute the informed consents to the students at the beginning of the course. The students were given a letter wherein I explained the purpose of the study and that if they agreed to participate, I would be using their discussions and classwork. The students were directed to my dissertation advisor or me if they had any question. The students were given a week to look at the materials before agreeing to participate, but were given the option to consent at the time the study was explained. The secretary in the English department’s main office had a folder for the students to return consents. Throughout the study, the signed consents were stored in a file cabinet in the English department, and I was

not granted access to the participants' names until after grades were posted at the end of the semester when grades were posted.

While I never saw any of the consent materials once they were passed out to the class, my colleague did come and talk with me after passing out the documents. This conversation led to my first ethical issue. The colleague told me that approximately five students consented in the first ENG 1113 section and perhaps ten in the second section. My original study had been designed with the assumption that the majority of the students would be willing to participate, and I had planned on audio recording the students' small and whole group discussions. When I discovered that the majority of the students were not going to participate, and further, that I had no way of knowing who chose to participate, I decided I that recordings were not feasible. Prior to this discover, I had already noticed the students in the first ENG 1113 section did not appear open to sharing their work and/or granting access to their information. 12 out of the 22 students in that class did not grant permission to share work and/or share grades electronically on the course syllabus signature sheet. 6 out of 21 in the second section likewise restricted access. This had created the impression that the students were hesitant to let outsiders into their academic space. Even before I began the consent process, I worried the students might feel that their privacy was being violated. In short, I became concerned that if I audio recorded the class, the students would not view the environment as safe. In addition, because I knew a large percentage of students in each class were not participating, I no longer believed I could obtain usable data from the recordings.

The twenty-one participants who elected to participate in the study are shown in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 contains the participants from ENG 1113 section 1, and Table 4 contains the participants from ENG 1113 section 2. Each table is structured as a Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure table to provide a glimpse into each participant's literacy story as they entered the class. The table includes each participant's pseudonym, gender, their personal feelings about English, their feelings about group interactions, past experiences with English, present goals for the class, and their future aspirations. This information was garnered from the student writing surveys I passed out the first day (Figure). All the participants except for one are entering freshman. The exception is a sophomore and is noted by an asterisk by his name.

### **Freshman Composition Student Identities**

The student writing survey the students completed during the first class was the first data I collected. I begin each class I teach by asking the students questions to help me better understand who they are as literacy learners and how they learn. For the purpose of this study, I altered to questions to help me understand how the students view class discussions, their writing practices, and their own learning:

1. Describe your previous experiences with English classes (what kinds of classes you have taken, what you enjoyed, what was a struggle for you).
2. What are your goals for college? This might include your anticipated major, future education and/or career goals. How do you see writing playing a role?
3. How do you learn best? For example, do you like direct instruction & taking notes, small group discussion and small group work, whole class discussions, projects, or presentations?
4. How do you feel about class discussion? Do you prefer whole or small group discussion? Do class discussions help you learn?
5. What are your strengths as a writer?
6. How would you like to grow as a writer? Are there specific skills you'd like to work on? Throughout the course we will have writing workshops, what kinds of topics would you like to see addressed?
7. As an instructor, how can I help you achieve your goals? In other words, what kind of teaching helps you learn? What kinds of things have your previous teachers done that worked well for you?
8. Finally, describe one or more interesting facts about yourself (this will help me learn your name).

*Figure 6. Introductory Writing Survey*

**First Discoveries: Students' Perceptions.** After the first class, I read through the student initial writing surveys to help build a picture of the students as literacy learners at the beginning of the course. In my research journal, I tallied each student's feelings about writing, past experiences with writing, feelings about discussions, their present goals for the class, and future aspirations. This gave me an overall understanding of how the students viewed English. At the end of the course when I learned the names of the participants, I formally coded the artifacts. In each artifact, I made notes in the margins to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013), and then I used the three-dimensional space approach to analyze the survey and narratives for interactions, both personal social, time continuity, and the context for the situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). As I read the surveys, I looked for key moments that defined the students as literacy



learners. Then, I constructed tables with my findings for each participating student in Section One and Section Two (Table 3 & 4).

In ENG 1113 Section One, there are 4 female participants and 2 male. 5 of the 6 participants enjoy English. 4 enjoy class discussions, but 1 experiences anxiety, and 1 is quiet. Only 1 student has taken advanced English classes. Three participants plan on majoring in education, 1 in audiology, 1 in accounting, and 1 in computer science.

Table 3. ENG 1113 Section One Participants

Identity		Interaction			Continuity	
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future
Laurel	F	Enjoys English; imaginative projects	Anxiety issues during group work	Past experiences positive; doesn't name classes	Research papers	Elementary teacher
Sarah	F	Enjoys English; grammar	Quiet, but appreciates group work	Took AP classes	MLA format; vocabulary	Doctorate in audiology
Nick *	M	Not a writer; sees no strengths	Enjoys discussions	Humanities English; high school basic	No clear goals	Accountant
Henry	M	Positive about writing; imaginative	Enjoys discussions	Basic high school ELA	Left Blank	Computer science
Monica	F	Loves to write; hates reading	Enjoys discussions	Basic high school ELA	Grammar	English teacher/author
Shea	F	Enjoys writing	Enjoys discussions	Left Blank	Grammar	Early Childhood

Table 4. ENG 1113 Section Two Participants

Identity		Interaction		Continuity		
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future
Betty	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Enjoys discussions	AP English	New writing strategies; creativity	Registered dietician
Caitlin	F	Enjoys English, but not strong writer	Anxiety issues during group work	On Level ELA; one honors	Transitions and flow	Elementary Teacher
Felicity	F	Enjoys creative English	Enjoys discussions	On Level ELA	Research writing	Elementary Teacher
Cathy	F	Struggled with essays; loves poetry	Prefers direct instruction	Pre-AP & AP English	Complex sentences	Chemistry/pre-pharmacy
James	M	Not a strong writer	Does not enjoy discussion	On Level ELA	Thinking and handwriting	Undeclared
Becky	F	Enjoys creative English	Enjoys small group discussions; shy	On Level ELA; creative writing	Punctuation and citation	Criminal Justice
Nathan	M	Enjoys creative writing	Enjoys discussions	Basic high school ELA	Professional tone; vocabulary	Band director
Luke	M	Enjoys essays	Enjoys small group discussions	On Level ELA	Handwriting	Master's in Education; Football coach
Amy	F	Enjoys creative writing	Enjoys discussions	Advanced high school ELA	Not clear	Accountant
Leia	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Does not enjoy discussions	On Level ELA	Improve creativity; better writing	Early Childhood Education
Emily	F	Struggled in ELA	Enjoys small group; not whole	British literature senior year	Citation skills	Undecided
Jacob	M	English is easy	Enjoys whole group discussions	On Level ELA	Improve at writing	Nursing major
Gilly	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Enjoys class discussions	On Level ELA	Improve organization	Criminal Justice
Alex	M	Enjoys ELA; not a writer	Enjoys whole group discussions	On Level ELA	Improve in general	Math
Brendan	M	Enjoys English; creative writing	Enjoys whole group discussions	On Level ELA	Research papers; resume	Theater major

In ENG 1113 Section Two, there are 9 female participants and 6 male. 9 participants enjoy English. 5 participants expressed struggles in prior English classes. 1 said English was easy. 8 participants enjoy large group/ all discussions. 4 enjoy small discussions only. 4 do not appreciate discussions, or only rarely. 5 students mentioned taking advanced English classes. 5 participants plan on majoring in education related fields, 2 in criminal justice, 1 in nursing, 1 dietician, 1 in accounting, 1 in math, 1 chemistry, 2 are undecided, and 1 in theater.

### **Data Sources and Description**

**Journaling.** Because action research is based in reflection, the primary data source was a research journal. In the journal, I not only reflected on my classroom practices related to critical literacy and dialogic instruction, but through reflection, delved into what I know, believe, and value, as well as my actions. The idea is to not passively accept happenings but go through a process that “challenges assumptions, ideological illusions, damaging social and cultural biases, inequalities, and personal behaviors” (Henderson, 2013, p. 29). The journaling began with a subjectivity journal wherein I unraveled my initial beliefs and values regarding the topic, and my own sociocultural context as well as how I see that affecting my understandings. Establishing my subjectivity helped me enter the research accepting that “the nature, conduct and consequences of their practices vitally affect [my] self-interests, and [my] self-interests may affect— and even distort—[my] practices, the way [I] understand them, and the conditions under which [I] practice” (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, p. 6). After that initial

entry, the journal chronicled my research decisions, unpacked my thoughts and impressions, and reflected on how my understandings changed in the process. In addition, I recorded ethical questions and decisions during research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Reason and Bradbury (2001) hold that the first and most important rule of action research is awareness, both of choice and the consequences of the choices. One way I handled this rule is by including choices and consequences in the journaling. Also, because I recognize that action research is value laden, I strove to “interrogate received notions of improvement or solutions in terms of who ultimately benefits from the actions undertaken” (Herr & Anderson, 2015. p. 4).

To help understand how my actions affected the students, I took field notes in my research journal each class where I charted the students’ participation during small and whole group discussions. When I observed practices or interactions that might be key for describing and/or explaining the study, narratives were developed based on field notes. The narratives provided “detailed contextual information” (Hendricks, 2013, p. 101). As part of this reflection, I explored how the established class structures affected my practices through a more evolved form of journaling that includes not just my initial thoughts and reflections but also a re-examining of my journals over time, and through comparing my initial reflections to findings from other sources, and exploring how these work to reinforce, refute, or challenge my understandings. Finally, I asked a critical friend to check field notes as part of the validation process.

**Artifacts.** Student-generated artifacts such as formative and summative assessments including personal creed journals, small group work, and writing assignments were collected to ascertain the development of discussion, writing, and thinking skills. Both sections of ENG 1113 were blended courses so some of the artifacts collected were online assignments, primarily blog posts and discussions. At the end of each unit, I used my journal and notes to reflect on how the previous intervention worked during an intervention cycle (Figure 5). Then, at the beginning of the new intervention cycle, I pre-selected formative and summative assessments to collect based on how the intervention is being applied in this cycle. Formative assessments like personal creed journals and other short writings, small group discussion reflections, homework, and formative group assignments help verify how the intervention was working, and whether the intervention was effective (Hendricks, 2013). I used the formative assessments to decide whether an intervention is working, to reflect and alter intervention plans as needed, and also to see student progress. The Personal Creed journals were useful for informal writing practice and reflection on growth and identity. Summative assessments, including the major essays, and the portfolio, were used to determine the success of an intervention at the end of an intervention cycle and also assess student success. At the end of each unit, the students completed anonymous unit reflections where students evaluated their own progress. This gave students a chance to provide their own perception of their learning, and also gave me valuable feedback for reflective planning. The students' feedback gave them a voice in the process and provided a way students could participate in the validation process (Herr & Anderson, 2015).

Throughout the process, formative and summative assessments were created to evaluate the learning measured through the intervention. I checked the assessments and also had a critical friend look at major assessments to ensure each instrument is valid. Where appropriate, criteria based rubrics were created to evaluate students on assignments (Hendricks, 2013). The specific artifacts and explanations of how they were used to answer the research questions is addressed in the following sections.

Table 5. Data Sources

Research Journal	My observations and reflections
Student Artifacts	Student Introductory Survey, personal creed journals, argumentative essay, portfolio, unit reflections, blog posts
Field Notes	Tallies and charts of in-class discussion, small group discussion, blogging participation

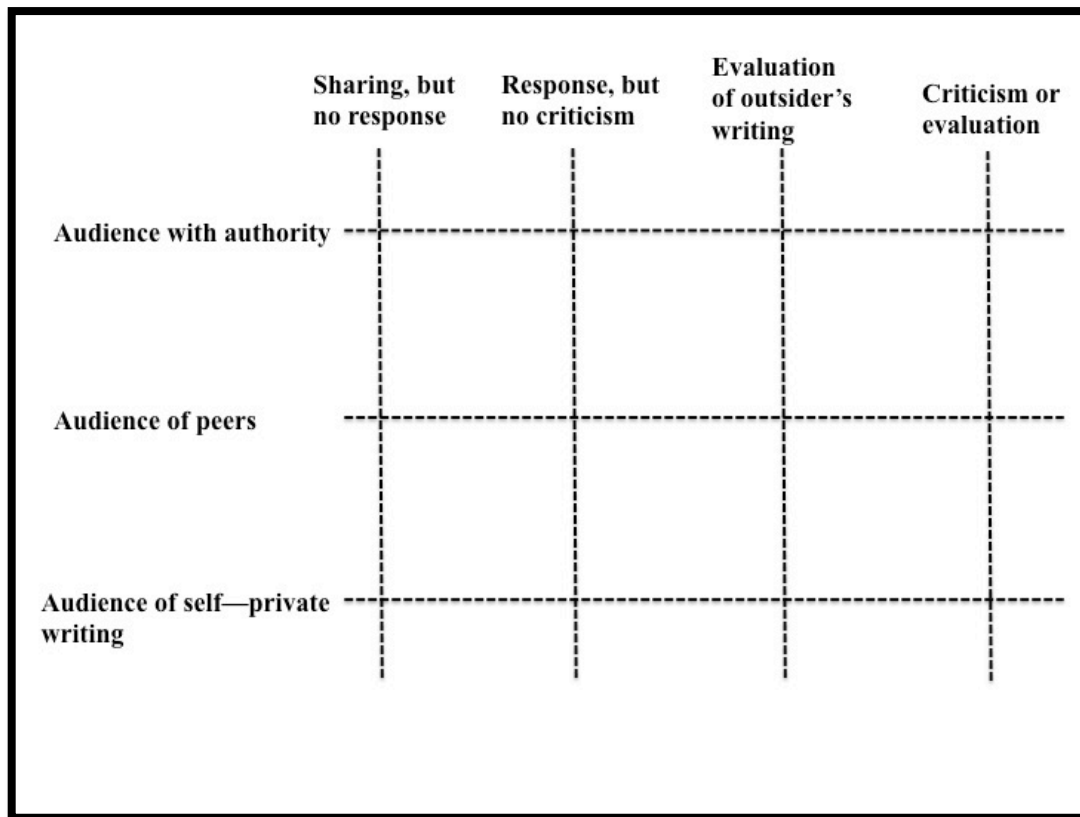


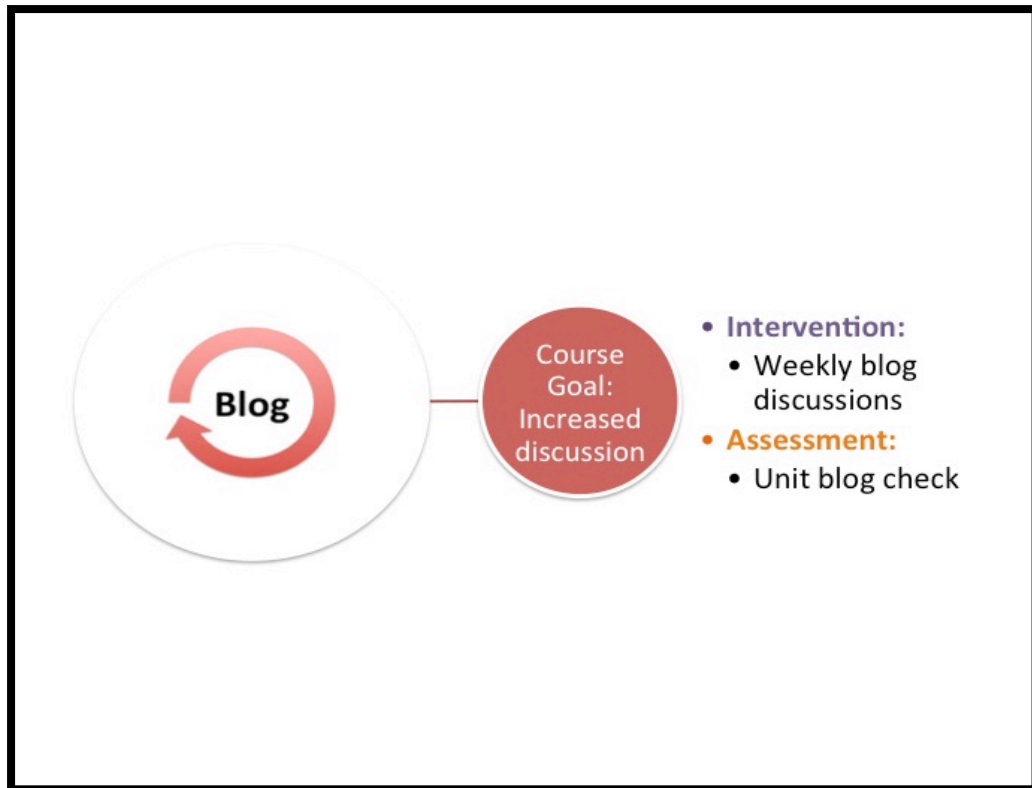
Figure 7. Modified Map of Audience and Response

### How the Data Sources Were Integrated Through the Intervention Cycles

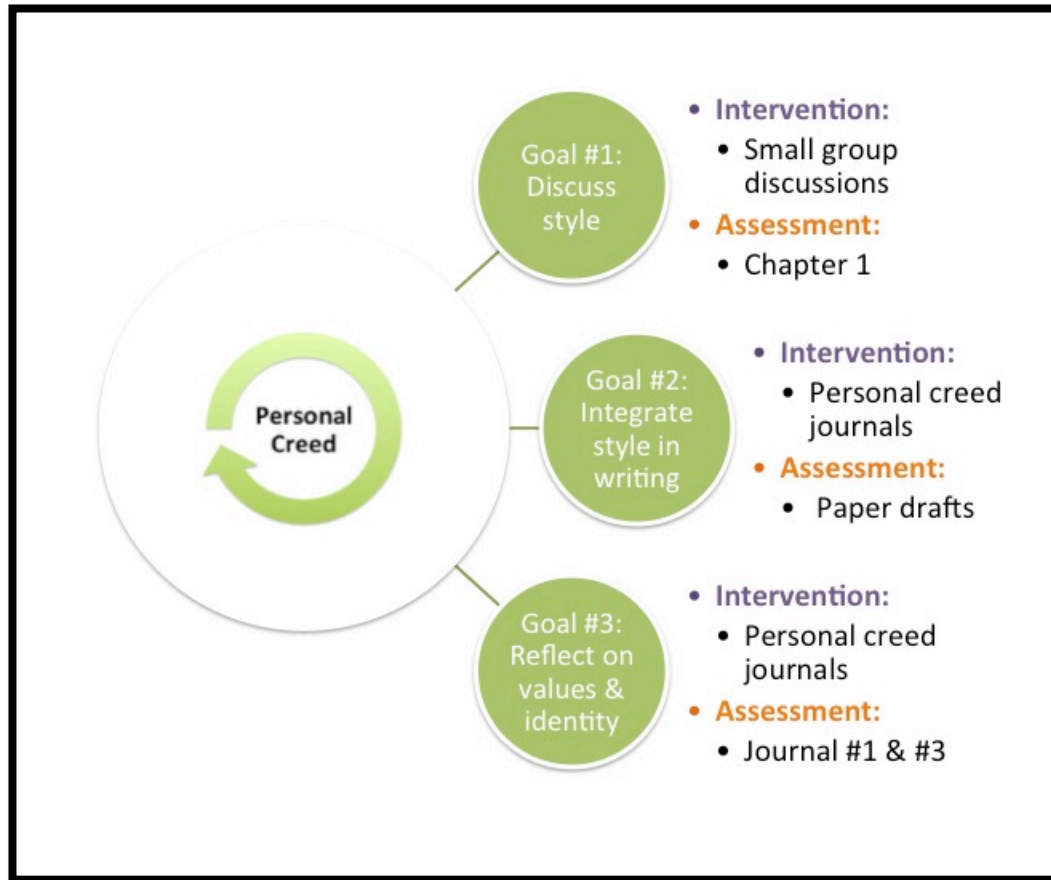
**Course Goal.** At the beginning of the semester, I set a course goal the class would work on throughout the semester: *“Students will increase participation in class discussions.”* This overarching goal was chosen to focus my instruction on dialogic strategies throughout the course. The intervention chosen was Elbow’s Audience and Response Map that I modified to meet the needs of my students (see Figure 5). First, I removed the “audience of allies,” the readers who care about the students. My students are nearly all new college students, many living away from home for the first time in dorms. Entering college freshman are in a transitional phase: they are surrounded by new people who are all in a new environment.

Therefore, I did not want to assume the students had access to their “audience of allies.” Then, I added a type of response, “evaluation of outsider’s writing.” I noticed the map did not account for responding to model texts that are used to teach the students a genre and/or style. In addition to hearing their words aloud, responses that describe the student’s own text, and responses that evaluate or judge the student’s text, students respond to outsider’s texts. Responding to an exemplar provides an opportunity to discuss and even judge how another person addressed the writing goals. This type of response calls for evaluation, but the judgment is of another’s work—a writer who is not present to feel judged. The course goal was assessed in two ways. The primary way discussion was assessed was through the use of discussion goals that were integrated into each unit. Student blogs and corresponding weekly discussions were also used to assess discussion participation in an online setting (Figure 8). In addition to this holistic goal, each unit had three unit goals aimed at exploring a specific research question: the quality of student discussion, students’ writing practices, and students’ ability to critically think and reflect on their own learning.



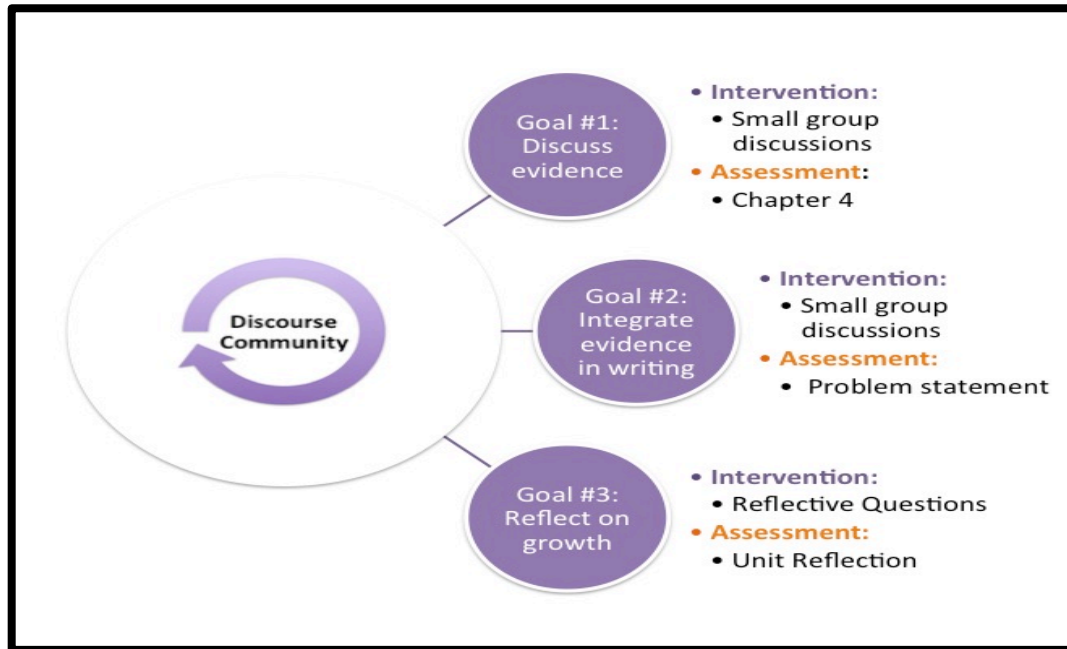


*Figure 8.* The goal, intervention, and assessment associated with the blog.



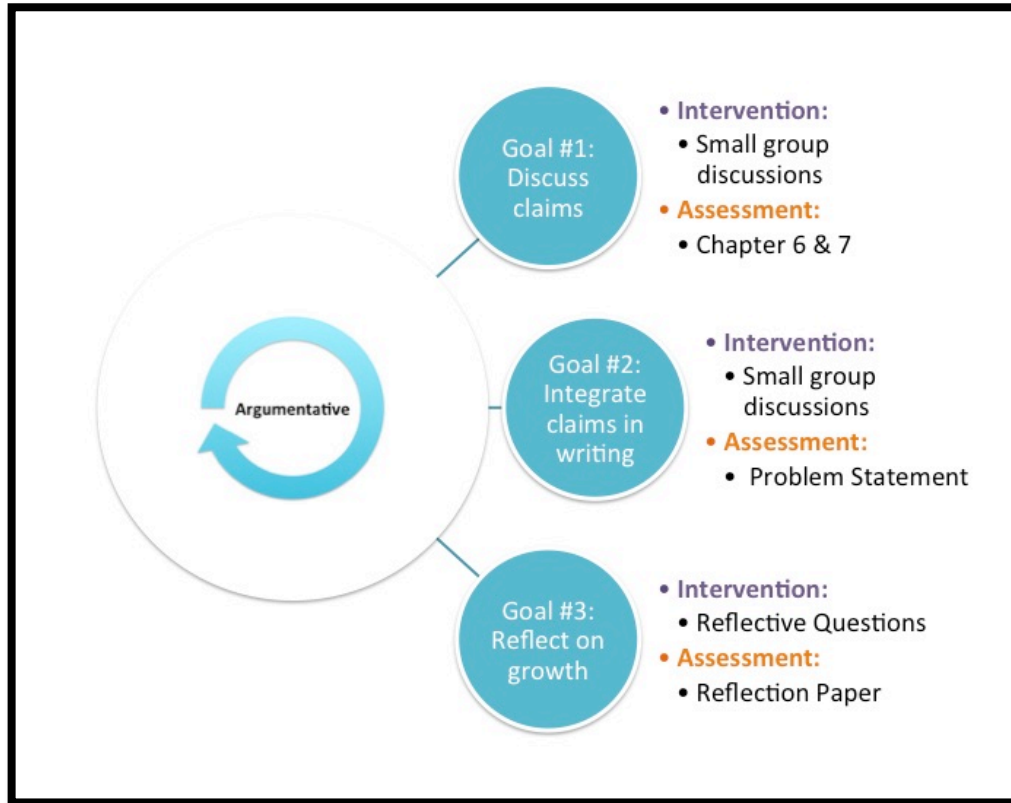
*Figure 9.* The goals, interventions, and assessments associated with the personal creed.

**Unit One: Personal Creed Unit.** The summative project for the first unit was the Personal Creed Project, the personal writing assignment where students develop a personal creed, or statement of who they stand for as a person and learner. The discussion goal was *“Students will be able to discuss writing style.”* The intervention chosen to help students discuss writing style was small group discussions over writing style. The formative assessment to check their progress was the small group discussions responses to *Outliers* chapter one. The writing practice goal was *“Students will be able to integrate ekphrasis and tropes in their writing.”* The intervention chosen were the personal creed journals tied to structured whole and small group discussions over writing style. The formative assessment selected to check their progress was the baseline literacy narrative. The literacy narrative provided a window into how the students’ see themselves as literacy learners and an example of how they wrote at the beginning of the course. The reflection goal was *“Students will be able to critically reflect on their values, identity, and growth.”* The intervention for this goal was also the personal creed journals along with the end of unit reflection. The formative assessment to check their progress was a personal creed journal, Creed Journal #3, which ask the students to consider how their own qualities may have helped them become the person they are now, and might help them--or might make it difficult for them to--become the person they wish to be in the future.



*Figure 10.* The goals, interventions, and assessments associated with the discourse community unit.

**Unit Two: Discourse Community Unit.** The summative project for the second unit was the Discourse Community Paper, the expository writing assignment analyzed a discourse community that where they are currently a member or one they would like to join The discussion goal for this unit was *“Students will be able to discuss how authors analyze and interpret evidence.”* The intervention chosen to help students discuss evidence was small group discussions over evidence and sources. The formative assessment to check their progress was the small group discussions responses to *Outliers* Chapter 4. The writing practice goal was *“Students will be able to integrate sources in their writing.”* The same intervention, small group discussions, was used. The formative assessment selected to check their progress was a problem statement. The problem statement was a departmental formative writing assessment being piloted that fall as part of our general education assessment plan. The reflection goal was *“Students will be able to critically reflect on their growth as a writer and learner.”* The intervention for this goal was reflective questions built into the writing process during the problem statement drafting, drafting, and peer revision. The unit reflection was used to assess their progress.



*Figure 11.* The goals, interventions, and assessments associated with the argumentative essay unit.

**Unit Three: Argumentative Essay Unit and Portfolio.** The summative project for the third unit was the Argumentative Essay, the argumentative writing assignment where students chose an arguable topic related to their chosen major, researched the topic in order to develop an informed opinion, and then argued this opinion using research as support. The final draft of this paper was submitted as part of the final portfolio and was assessed as part of the portfolio (Appendix D). The discussion goal for this unit was “*Students will be able to discuss how authors construct and support claims.*” The intervention chosen to help students discuss claims was small group discussions over claims and supporting evidence. The formative assessment to check their progress was the small group discussions responses to *Outliers* chapters 6 and 7. The writing practice goal was “*Students will be able to write claims and support those claims with evidence.*” The same intervention, small group discussions, was used. The formative assessment selected to check their progress was the rough draft of their paper. The reflection goal was the same as the previous unit, “*Students will be able to critically reflect on their growth as a writer and learner.*” The intervention for this goal was a reflective paper built into the portfolio revision process. The end of course reflection, final reflection papers, and blog responses were used to check their end of course progress.

**Unit reflections.** To assess the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal, *students will be able to reflect on their own learning*, I assigned Unit Reflections. The students anonymously completed guided questions that asked them to reflect on their learning at the end of each unit. This also created a way for the participants as stakeholders to have a voice in their

learning (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The unit reflections were anonymous because I wanted students to feel safe providing honest feedback knowing that the power imbalance could affect how they response to questions about my instruction (Zeni, 2009). The questions were designed to gauge what they believe about their learning in the unit as well as to give the students an opportunity to guide instruction in the next unit. The same questions were asked each time:

- Summarize: What are some key ideas you learned this unit.
- What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **most** useful for learning to write?
- What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **least** useful for learning to write?
- What would you like to see us discuss in the new unit? Are there ideas and/or resources that I could bring in to help your understandings?
- How do you see the ideas in the first unit helping you in our new unit?
- How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer?

The frequencies of responses were tallied (Shank, 2002). These reflections were also segmented by research question, notes were made in the margins, and the notes were used to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013). The responses were compiled into a table that can be found in Appendix L. The unit reflections gave the students a way to express their thoughts and feelings about the class. I used their feedback to guide my thinking as I planned a new intervention cycle.



To summarize, during each unit I recorded my observations, thoughts, and feelings in my research journal. To help me bring contextualized meaning to my journal, I created field notes wherein I recorded tallies and charts of in-class discussion, small group discussion, and blogging participation. Each unit I also collected artifacts to ascertain the development of discussion, writing, and thinking skills. The artifacts gathered varied throughout the units. 5 shows the interventions and assessments used throughout the course by unit.

Interventions & Assessments	Blogs	Personal Creed Unit	Discourse Community Unit	Argumentative Unit
Discussion Intervention	Weekly Blog Discussions	Elbow's Map in Small Groups	Small Group Discussion Protocol	Small Group Discussion Protocol
Discussion Assessment	Unit Blog Check	Outlier Chapter 1 Discussion	Outlier Chapter 4 Discussion	Outlier Chapter 6 & 7 Discussion
Writing Intervention		Personal Creed journals	Small Group Discussions	Small Group Discussions
Writing Assessment		Paper Drafts	Problem Statement	Problem Statement
Reflection Intervention		Personal Creed Journals	Reflective Questions	Reflective Questions
Reflection Assessment		Journals 1 & 3	Unit Reflection	Reflection Paper
Summative Assessment	Blog Rubric	Personal Creed Paper	Expository Paper	Argumentative Essay & Portfolio
Research Journal and Field Notes				

## Data Analysis

Data analysis was an iterative process that took place from the beginning of the study. Action research does not have an end, but consists of reflective process wherein data analysis is one step in the research spiral that provides opportunities to shape knowledge about teaching practices that will become part of the next stage in the intervention plan. So, after data was collected during the implementation part of a cycle, the data collected was analyzed using the methods described in the

following paragraphs, and that analysis was used to shape the next stage in the cycle. One of the primary goals of the study was to understand how my critical literacy and dialogic instruction practices influence and relate to my beliefs and values. Because of this goal, and the nature of the study and data collected, narrative analysis was deemed appropriate (Reissman, 2002). To construct the narrative, I used the interpretive framework described by Esterberg (2002) and Reissman (2002), which focuses on how people's understandings of the world are storied, and like stories contain structures.

**Journal Analysis.** Journals were analyzed similarly during each cycle by reading through the text, making notes in the margins, and using the notes to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013). As I coded the journal and examined my notes, I not only explored what happened, but looked for how the happenings related to my values and beliefs (i.e. do they reinforce, counter, or challenge any beliefs or assumptions?). To do this, I valued code the journal to see how my words revealed the values and beliefs (Saldana, 2009). After forming initial codes in the margins, I described the data using a three-dimensional space approach that analyzes the data for interactions, both personal and social, time continuity, and the context for the situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). As I examined the story I attempted to find epiphanies—the key moments that define the interaction. I used these details to find and interpret the larger meaning in the story. Finally, I rewrote the story in chronological order being sure to situate the story in the normal context of the class, but paying a particular focus on the process that occurred, while pointing out unique occurrences (Creswell, 2013). Journal

analysis in this manner provided “a way of stepping back into the ongoing analysis” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 91). I drew coded information from my other data sources (the artifacts and field notes) into the story to provide concrete, contextual materials wherever they appropriately fit in the story’s chronology (Creswell, 2013).

**Field Note Analysis.** Because I did not know participants’ identities until the conclusion of the study, I developed a de-identified way to check all the students’ progress throughout each unit by writing field notes. This allowed me to determine the efficacy of an intervention and set new goals throughout the study. Field notes were analyzed during each cycle by reading through the notes, making notes in the margins, and using the notes to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013). Embedded throughout the field notes were hand drawn charts tracking student discussion, student progress towards writing goals, student blogging, and end of unit reflection feedback. ). I reflected on my notes in my research journal to capture my thoughts and feelings at the time the data was collected. To analyze these charts, frequencies were tallied as well (Shank, 2002). The handwritten charts were typed. The initial codes were compared and categorized into categories and sub-categories, and organized into tables for each sub-category. Tallying was also done to determine how frequently an idea was discussed during reflection. Throughout the process, notes and memos were taken to understand how the ideas related, and eventually conceptualizing these categories revealed themes (Shank, 2002; Charmaz, 2006

**Artifact Analysis.** After the study was concluded and the participants' identities were revealed, each selected artifact underwent a second round of analysis. The artifacts that were collected to understand the students' identities as literacy learners was analyzed using a three-dimensional space approach that explores the data for interactions, both personal and social, time continuity, and the context for the situation (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). As I examined each participants' story as it was revealed through the writings and reflections they wrote in class, I attempted to find epiphanies—the key moments that define the interaction. I used these details to find and interpret the larger meaning in the story. Finally, I rewrote each story in chronological order being sure to situate the story in the normal context of the class, but paying a particular focus on the process that occurred, while pointing out unique occurrences (Creswell, 2013). Artifact analysis in this manner provided “a way of stepping back into the ongoing analysis” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 91). I drew coded information from my other data sources (the artifacts and field notes) into the story to provide concrete, contextual materials wherever they appropriately fit in the story's chronology (Creswell, 2013).

Artifacts that were collected to measure the effects of the interventions were coded separately. The major assignment rubrics (personal, expository, argumentative, and portfolio) were de-identified and tallied according the categories being assessed (Shank, 2002). These major categories were divided into sub-categories based on the criteria for assessment within the category. Formative assignments were coded by the research question they addressed, notes were taken

to assess student progress, and the results compiled into to tables. Tables were developed to ascertain student progress (Cresswell, 2013). Unit reflections were tallied (Shank, 2002), segmented by research question, coded in the margins, and then compiled into tables.

### **Validation**

As I designed the study I began by writing a subjectivity statement writing to ascertain how my experiences, feelings, and beliefs may affect my research. I incorporated Reason's (1994) approach to the topic

that he calls critical subjectivity, which he distinguishes from both 'the naïve subjectivity of the primary process awareness and the attempted objectivity of egoic secondary awareness. In other word, as researchers we acknowledge that we all enter research with a perspective draw from our own experiences, and so we articulate to the best of our abilities these perspectives or biases and build a critical reflexivity into the research process. We also articulate these evolving perspectives in our journaling, field notes, and, to some extent, in the dissertation itself' (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 73).

I used Bradbury's (2016) criteria for quality action research shown in Table 1. These standards helped me ensure that when I validated, the validation process was part of my learning process. I held to McNiff and Whitehead's (2002) idea that "validation is not the summative point in a programme that has led to closure, but a formative engagement in an experience which contains emergent property for the realization of new potentialities" (p. 108). My goal through both the research I

conducted and the validation process was to reshape my teaching practices. I wanted to learn how I could improve and then use that knowledge to change.

The findings in this paper represent my personal claims to knowledge. This knowledge is supported by corroborating evidence and evaluated by clear criteria. The chapters illustrate my knowledge generation through my work with my students. They reflect my “transformative process of coming to know” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p. 104). Through my descriptions of my process and actions, I explained my goals and used evidence to show the extent to which my goals were achieved. The final chapters will demonstrate how I am creating theories of practices through dialogic engagement with the issue.

Validation involved sharing research findings with participants, critical friends, colleagues, and my dissertation committee and asking if the thoughts and beliefs were sound. I also asked friends, colleagues, and committee to check whether my knowledge increased as a result of my actions (McNiff & Whitehead, 2002). Like Whitehead (2016) suggested, I ground the validity of my findings and descriptions by taking responsibility for my own personal knowledge. I state that this paper represents my attempt to understand the world, and in particular, my teaching, as individual. This paper represents my personal judgments of the efficacy of my actions and my attempt to make an original contribution to my field. At every step in the process, I discussed my findings and interpretations with critical friends both in and out side the system. My dissertation committee, the department at my school, and the Institutional Review Boards at both institutions approved my study design. As I conducted the research, I discussed my findings

with both colleagues at my school and a critical friend with a PhD outside my field. My students also helped validate my findings. At the end of each unit and the course, I asked for anonymous feedback on unit reflections. This feedback helped me determine if I was meeting my goals for the unit and if my actions were having the impact I hoped they would. I also asked students to critical reflect on their writing process and growth at the end of the course. These measures allowed me to judge if my actions helped the people they were intended to help.

After I concluded the research, I wrote up the findings and shared them with my critical friend, a validation group consisting of my colleagues, and then with my dissertation committee. I created folders with findings and data divided by research question and theme. I shared these folders and explained what I learned. I asked each group to consider whether my knowledge claims were true, understandable for my audience, and in an authentic voice reflecting sincere beliefs, and appropriate for the forum. Then I asked for suggestions and alternate interpretations.

“We have to continually be jumping off cliffs and developing our wings on the way down.” ~ Ray Bradbury

## Chapter 4: Findings

Per my research design, I charted the effects of my chosen interventions on the 21 students who chose to participate in regard to how the interventions impacted individual growth in discussion, writing, and thinking. I began by constructing a chronological narrative of my study based on my research journal analysis and then integrated the findings into the overarching narrative. However, due to the scale of the task, it was challenging to follow the development of three research questions when all the discoveries were laid out chronologically. Therefore, I structured the narrative using two research threads: discussion and writing. To answer the question, *“to what extent can critical literacy, as taught through the dialogic, influence the quality of student discussion?”* I follow the development of student discussion throughout the course discussing the interventions used and how the chosen interventions affected student learning. To answer the question, *“to what extent can critical literacy, as taught through the dialogic, influence student writing practices?”* I follow the development of student writing skills by discussing the interventions used and how student writing transformed. Evidence from my research journal, field notes, and student artifacts are incorporated throughout. Throughout the findings, I discuss the extent the interventions influenced *“students’ ability to critically think and reflect on their own learning”* using student perceptions of their learning. The chapter ends with a reflection on how the students perceive their abilities to discuss and write as garnered from portfolio writing reflections.



Findings reveal that students required structured discussions and active encouragement to reap the benefits of discussion. When students can volunteer to respond, only students who enjoy whole group discussions volunteer. Structured discussion protocols work to invite shy or reluctant students to participate. These protocols increase the overall quality of both small and whole group discussions. The efficacy of blog-based discussion was mixed. Many students who actively participate in class do not participate online. However, students who are introverted, shy, or experience anxiety regarding class discussion respond positively to discussions online. Small group analysis of model texts helps students understand how targeted writing strategies worked to improve writing. Students were also able to see connections between the strategies and recognized how each skill would be useful in future writing. After discussing writing strategies in small groups, students were able to integrate the strategies into their own writing. The more students engage in discussion based writing strategies, such as peer review, the more students perceive them as useful.

### **Discussion Findings**

Effective analysis of student discussion practices was hampered by a lack of participants in both classes. Only 6 students participated in Section One, so there is insufficient class discussion data to analyze. As a result, I decided to only include the discussion practices for the 15 participants Section Two. However, there were still non-participating students in this class, so at times I am not able to present the full data for all participants. I analyzed the efficacy of discussion practices in

Section Two participants throughout the personal creed, discourse community, and argumentative units. In each unit, I aimed to understand:

- 1) If my practices worked to encourage students to participate in discussion
- 2) If my practices influence students' ability to critically think and reflect on their learning.

In addition to the course goal, "students will increase participation in class discussions," each unit, I set unit discussion goals. The unit discussion goals were set to encourage critical thinking through discussion about key writing strategies required for success during the unit. I assessed student progress toward achieving the unit goals through formative small group discussion assignments. The formative assessments chosen were all based on our course reading, *Outliers*. The formative assessments were structured to build student understanding of effective writing. While the questions I chose to assess each unit relate specifically to the unit's goal, all the assignments asks the to consider the how claims, sources, rich details, and tropes work together (Appendix F). At the end of each unit, the students were invited to provide feedback on their learning through anonymous unit reflections. I wanted the reflections to be anonymous to encourage honest feedback, and to give all the students a voice in the action research process. In retrospect, I realize the anonymity makes it impossible to know if the thoughts expressed reflect the participating students. The reflections do effectively convey the perceptions of all the students who enrolled, whether or not they chose to participate in the study.

## Unit One: Evolving Student Discussion Practices

The discussion goal for the first unit was: “*students will be able to discuss writing style, focusing on ekphrasis and tropes.*” To accomplish this goal the student participated in small group discussions over style. At the beginning of the course, I respected Elbow’s map of audience and response by only asking for student volunteers to share their writing in class and only responding to the student volunteers by reacting to their words by saying something like “thank you for sharing” or repeating something I heard the students share and asking follow up questions (Elbow, 2000). The first couple of weeks, all in class writing was informal, and I told the students that they were welcome to keep their responses private. They were not graded on any of this early work. The idea behind this was to build trust. I was trying to foster student comfort by only letting those who felt comfortable sharing to share. These students contributed good information, but the other students were willing to sit passively and let the talkers carry the discussion. Few students volunteered to share with the whole group. When I looked back at my research journal, I saw this note:

I’m trying to respect Elbow’s map and only ask for volunteers to start, and all my comments were reactions not evaluations. Not many wanted to share with a whole group. But, I see good discussions at the tables. Last class I noticed that people participated in the whole group discussion of the quotes I posted for reflection better in the 2<sup>nd</sup> class. In that class I had people share in small groups prior to sharing with the whole group.

To understand what was happening, I began charting student participation using field notes. High-level participants who carry the conversation are labeled in green. The majority of high-level participants said they enjoy whole group discussion on the student writing survey (Table 7).

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Table 7. Participants who Enjoy all Discussion or Prefer Whole Groups

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**Betty** “I enjoy class discussions. I feel as though it helps the understanding of the topic and brings the class together.”

**Felicity** “I enjoy them tremendously. I like both whole and small group discussions, and both ways help me learn.”

**Cathy** “Whole class discussion helps me understand the subject from different points-of-views, because sometimes one just isn’t enough.”

**Jacob** “I prefer whole group discussions. They help me learn by hearing other peoples ideas.”

**Amy** “I enjoy both when all participants are mature and don’t start yelling at each other. It gives me ideas and shows me new points of view.”

**Alex** “I really like it. And I like whole class rather than small because it is harder to stay on task if it’s only a few people.”

Note: Students in green are high-level participants

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After reflecting on my journal and field notes and noticing that participation was not increasing, I modified the discussion practices. The first day we discussed the introduction to *Outliers*, I asked the students to write their own individual response, share the response in small groups, and then asked a volunteer to share with the whole group. This seemed to help some, but whole group discussions did not really pick up until the next week. The pivotal moment happened when I altered how I asked students to respond. That day, I called on tables to share, and then asked the other tables to add to what the first table shared. This led to more productive discussion wherein a variety of students shared.

**The Pivotal Moment.** A pivotal moment in my understanding of how to help my students learn using discussions occurred during The Chapter One discussion of *Outliers* at the end of Unit One. I asked the students to read Chapter One prior to class and to bring the answers to three content questions with them to class (Appendix F). At the beginning of class, I asked the students to share their answers to the content questions in small groups, and then each table shared what

they discussed with the whole class. After the whole class discussed the content covered in the chapter, I directed the students to discuss three questions about Gladwell's writing style in and write a group response.

When the small groups had to time to answer the questions, we discussed the responses as a whole group again. This structure worked to generate engaged small and whole group discussion. The discussions were more productive when the students had time to discuss, time to write down their answers, and time to share as a small group. I also discovered that when I called on a table to answer and then ask the other tables to add onto what the first table said the discussion grows in depth, and does not falter like when I asked for volunteers to respond. In my journal I noted the change:

Calling on a table to answer, and then having other groups add on works WAY better than volunteers. When they have time to discuss and can write down the answers and share as a small group, the discussions are more productive—they add to each other.

So, volunteering may be beneficial for building trust, but it does not seem to generate productive discussions. Most students, even if they claim to like discussion, seem to need more support and structure for discussion to be productive.

**Chapter 1: Discussions of an author’s writing style.** At the end of this

class, the students turned in their individual and small group discussion question answers. I tied up the discussion responses, and then analyzed them looking at how well the groups were critically analyzing the text for the targeted stylistic devices.

Each table’s response to the question about Gladwell’s use of tropes is shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Discussions of Author’s Style			
In class we discussed the four master tropes, metaphor, irony, metonymy, and synecdoche. Which of these tropes does Gladwell use throughout the chapter to develop his ideas? Cite an example from the text to support your answer.			
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	<b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	<b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell uses irony throughout the chapter to develop his ideas. For example, one would think that a child who studies hard and puts forth the most effort would be the most successful. However, the reality is, “...the oldest children scored somewhere between four and twelve percentile points better than the youngest children” (Outliers 28).	Gladwell uses several ironys in this chapter. An example is the birthday issue. You don’t expect to judge success by the day that you were born, but he believes that the older children will be more successful.	He uses irony to compliment the Mathew effect. The typical way you see success is different from the things that actually contribute to success.	Metonymy, because he substitutes the players names with their birthdays. “March 11 starts around one side of the tigers net, leaving the pack for his team mate Jan 4, who passes it to Jan 22.” Pg. 23
Key: Orange = analysis of writing; yellow highlight = evidence given to support analysis			

Table 1 wrote the strongest response with the highest degree of critical thinking. Table 1 restated the question in the answer and identified a specific trope, irony, used by Gladwell. Then, Table 1 explains why the situation is ironic by stating the contrast between expectation and reality shown using a common assumption “if you work hard you will be successful” and then contrasting the

assumption with what Gladwell discovered citing a specific example in the text. In the response, the table embeds a well-chosen quote that supports the answer and correctly cites the quote in MLA format. While the other tables' writing is not as clear, they all do correctly describe a way a trope is used in the chapter. This shows the groups understand the literary element and can analyze how Gladwell used the element in *Outliers*. As a caveat, I do note in my research journal that "the groups struggled to grasp Gladwell's primary claim," and I had to work with the individual groups to help them understand Gladwell's argument. Once they understood the argument, though, they were able to find ways he used tropes to support his argument. However, the other tables do not present their analysis in a way that would be clear to someone who had not read the text. The reader would have to know the Matthew effect, which is based on sociologist Robert Merton's work. Merton argues that successful people are "given the kinds of special opportunities that lead to further success" (Gladwell, 2011, p. 30). The reader would also need to know that Gladwell argues if your birthday falls at an advantageous time of the year, you will have more opportunities to be successful.

**Student reflections on the efficacy of discussions During Unit One.** At the end of Unit One, the students were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the efficacy of class discussion. 26 students completed Unit One reflections. The unit reflections contain a question to assess the students' perspective of their growth: "*How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer?*" Overall, the students perceive the class discussions as having a positive influence on their learning. The students discuss how they are

becoming more confident, learning more about who they are as a person, and are feeling more comfortable sharing their opinions with others. Students noted that they were gaining confidence as writers and speakers. One student stated, “The discussions have been great. The more and more we do them, the better we will get.” This was notable because the student recognized that discussion is a skill that can be developed. Another student recognized the how developing their opinions and analyzing others writings through discussion could help improve their own writing. They wrote, “All essays and writings come from you, your opinions and who you are, further embedding your personalities and beliefs, while also making you write to improve grammar tropes, styles, and more.” While the majority of the students described the discussions as successful, four students expressed dissatisfaction. One student said they could not participate in discussions due to anxiety. Two stated they weren’t sure the discussions were having an effect. One person said, “I feel like unless you’re in the right group you either get distracted or don’t really talk.”

### **Unit Two: Discussion Quality**

In the first unit, I aimed to build a comfortable environment for class discussion. When I read the unit reflections, I saw that the majority of the students did feel the discussions were having a positive impact. However, based on my research journal notes, I was concerned that the high-level participants were dominating small group discussions. I decided that during Unit Two, I would work to increase the efficacy of discussion by increasing the participation in the small group discussions. The initial writing surveys revealed that students who were



hesitant to participate in discussions generally felt more comfortable talking in small groups (Table 9). I hoped that if I could increase participations in the small groups, the whole group discussion would eventually also improve. I also hoped that the small group discussion environment would encourage the students with anxiety, or shy, like Becky, to share.

Table 9. Participants who Prefer Small Group Discussions

James	“I’m not real big on speaking in front of the class. But if it’s necessary, I would prefer small groups. If I’m confused on a subject it could help me.”
Becky	“I like class discussions, but I’m pretty shy.”
Nathan	“Small discussions. Yes.”
Luke	“Small group work, taking notes, small group discussion.”
Leia	“It’s okay. Small group. Sometimes.”
Emily	“I prefer small group discussions. I don’t do well with extremely large groups of people.”
Note: Students in green are high-level participants	

To help me keep track, instead of simply tracking high-level participants, I charted each student’s participation using field notes by drawing the tables and color-coding participation at each table. After class, I took notes regarding participation trends. I used the field notes to create tables tracking student participation. Table 10 illustrates student discussion throughout the unit.

Participants who exceeded the standard, wrote the answers for their groups, shared responses with the class, and asked questions (Green). Participants who met the standard were observed discussing and trying to help but needed support to engage (Orange). Those who showed a low level of participation did not know the answer when called on, played on their phone, and in general did not seem like a member of the group (Blue). Absent students were marked in yellow. I began charting the during the Unit Introduction. That day in my research journal I noted:

It seemed like my high-level participants were providing most of the contributions. Felicity is a power-house. The table of boys (Table 4) seemed game on.

Concerned by the continued inequity, I decided to make the following changes: 1) the groups would have to shift writers each question to “spread the wealth” of responsibility; 2) all group members needed to be prepared to answer for the group; 3) I would call on average and low level participants to answer for the group. I made a personal goal to check in with every student each class. The protocol did work to increase student participation. With one exception, Jacob, the participants all began meeting or exceeding the discussion standard on the days they attended class. Caitlin shows the most surprising increase in discussion. In Section Two, she was the only participant who expressed no interest in discussion. She wrote, “Class discussion makes me extremely nervous. They don’t really benefit me because I tend to zone out.” She even said, “I don’t do very good with group work because people over power me.” Despite this, Caitlin exceeded participation expectations every class. This might be due to the fact that two of her table mates were frequently absent and the other broke her hand and could not write. This situation seemed to result in her taking on a leadership role in the group. After this protocol was introduced, attendance became the primary barrier to effective discussion. The efficacy of the discussion protocol is further discussed in the context of how it worked to improve critical thinking.

Participants by Group		Unit Intro: Explain	Analyze & Interpret	Problem Statement	Individual Paragraphs	Primary Sources
1	Felicity	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Cathy	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Green
	Jacob	Blue	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Blue
2	Caitlin	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Luke	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow
	Leia	Yellow	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
	Gilly	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
3	Amy	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Green
	Emily	Blue	Green	Yellow	Orange	Orange
	Becky	Blue	Green	Yellow	Orange	Orange
4	Nathan	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
	James	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Alex	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
NP	Brendan	Orange	Orange	Yellow	Yellow	Orange
	Betty	Orange	Green	Orange	Yellow	Green

Green = Exceeds; Orange = Meets; Blue = Low  
NP = At tables with non-participants

**Discussions: Author’s Integrating Sources.** In Unit Two, I tied the discussion goal, *Students will be able to analyze and interpret how authors analyze and interpret evidence*, to the writing goal, *Students will be able to integrate sources in their writing*. The small group discussions of *Outliers* were used as the intervention for this goal. Prior to starting the unit, I chose chapter 4 responses as the formative assessment. After giving the students brief notes on expository essay writing and discourse communities, I designed the lessons to closely analyze the expository writing process in *Outliers*. Each day, the students were given an aspect of expository writing and then asked to analyze Gladwell’s writing. The first day the class focused on how Gladwell explained his ideas in Chapter 4. For example:

- What are two strategies Gladwell uses to explain? Describe how he uses each strategy and cite an example to support it.

The second day, the class focused on how Gladwell analyzed and interpreted the evidence he presents. The students were asked to provide quoted evidence from the text, introduce the evidence using an attributive tag, and cite in MLA format. For example:

- Describe two ways Gladwell analyzes the evidence he presents to prove his claim. For each example, be sure to use an attributive tag and cite the page number.

This time, the students were instructed to shift writers after each question. This strategy worked. I did not notice any low participants. However, at times this required active intervention:

Amy is overly vocal and interrupts and controls her group, but she struggles with the ideas. Emily was trying to contribute, but she struggled to compete. I had to ask Amy to let Emily write her answer. Becky is the 3<sup>rd</sup> member and she seems frustrated by the group dynamics (Group 3).

This exchange occurred as I moved from group to group offering feedback and asking about the examples in the text. I was talking through an example of analysis an interpretation in Gladwell with Table 3 and watching their faces. Some students seemed overwhelmed by the need to both use attributive tags to introduce the text and the high level questions. When groups struggled, I gave them an example from the text as a model and talked it through with them. Overall, it seemed like the students were making good progress, so I was excited to conclude the discussion the following Monday.

Unfortunately, the Monday dedicated to finishing our discussion of Chapter 4 ended up being the Monday before the students had a four day weekend for fall break. 10 students were missing from Section One and 6 from Section Two. As a

result the students were missing their group answers. Because of a surprisingly high number of absences, I changed lessons at the last minute. This threw me, and I made the last minute decision to discuss the next stage of writing their essay instead—writing the research problem statement. My journal records my frustration:

I didn't follow the appropriate discussion protocol because I was so thrown by all the absences. I wasn't prepared to cover this assignment, so I didn't have the appropriate questions ready. I had my model and good notes, but I felt all over the place. I ended up talking at them and fell back on the strong students because I was worried about the lesson and felt like we all needed strong voices to share (me included.)

After feeling like we were making such good progress, the day felt like a failure. After class on Monday, I altered my lesson and turned the group assignment into an individual assignment in case the class was small. This was a good idea because only 13 students attended Section Two. As a whole group, we reviewed the “explain,” “analyze,” and “interpret” pieces of the assignment. The students did a good job during the discussion. When I called on one student by name to share and they faltered, another student stepped in to help them.

They were able to participate and help each other. When a NP faltered, another student gave an example. Amy helped another NP who got scattered, and this bolstered the NP who was able to finish discussing their answer.

It felt like they were supporting each other and working together. I did notice that nearly every student who attended tended was a good student and strong participant. Then, the students wrote individual paragraph responses to the prompt. There were 9 participants in class that day. 8 wrote successful chapter four expository paragraphs. These paragraphs began with a correct claim and introduced

their quote smoothly by saying some variation of “Gladwell states.” All the students use evidence from the text and attempt to cite it in MLA format. The full directions are included in the chart below. The unit focus is on analysis and interpretation of evidence.

Contrasting member responses is a useful way to demonstrate the range in student responses. Each member of Table 4 is shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Author’s Use of Sources		
<p><i>Write an expository paragraph describing Gladwell's conclusions about the relationship between intelligence and success.</i></p> <p><i>In your paragraph, be sure to include all the elements we have been discussing in class:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 <i>Begin with a clear claim stating Gladwell's conclusion.</i></li> <li>2 <i>Use evidence from Outliers to support your claim (being sure to introduce your evidence appropriately and cite it in MLA format).</i></li> <li>3 <i>Then, explain how the cited evidence supports your claim.</i></li> </ol>		
Table Four		
James (WWDD)	Nathan (MWD)	Alex (MWD)
<p>In the book called the Outliers Gladwell, the author, argues that intelligence alone cannot bring someone success. Their family background and opportunities present also factor in. In his book Gladwell talks about an old study conducted by Dr. Terman on IQ in children and how that will affect their success in their future, but he encountered a problem. Not all of his subjects were being successful, in fact a large number never even finished high school. There was only one explanation for this inconsistency, “In the end, only one thing mattered: family background” (Gladwell 111). The kids who Terman would consider to be “failures” all came from poor family where most of the parents had little education, while the ones who would go on to become doctors and senators came from wealthy families that can provide the opportunities for their little genius to be a big shot.</p>	<p>Gladwell concludes that 2 people with the same IQ will have different success due to upbringing. Gladwell analyzes that Langan and Oppenheimer are different due to the fact of their up-bringing. (91 &amp; 108) Langan, who was brought up in a rather poor environment, was able to graduate from 2 colleges but then ended up becoming a farmer. While Oppenheimer many years before, went to Harvard and Cambridge and later worked on the Mahattan Project. “Is it any wonder Oppenheimer handled the challenges of his life so brilliantly?”. (Gladwell 109) With the privileged childhood the Oppenheimer had he had to do great things. Whereas Langan was just not suprising that he became a farmer and didn’t use his intelligence to his advantage.</p>	<p>In Gladwell’s book Outliers, he tries to tell us all about success and what factors take place to our success. Gladwell analyzes Termans work and tells us about it. (Gladwell, 74-77) Terman states “There is nothing about an individual as important as his IQ, except possibly his morals” (Gladwell pg 75), but on top of that there are other limiting factors. Gladwell continues to explain Chris Langans life along with Robert Oppheimer, two men who are very intelligent, but didn’t quite have the same success. (Gladwell 108-109) This tells us it is not about just how smart you are, but other factors, like how your were raised or what you believe in really effects your outcome in life.</p>
Key: Orange = analysis of writing; yellow highlight = evidence given to support analysis		

James provided the best answer. His response begins with a clear claim, “In the book called the *Outliers* Gladwell, the author, argues that intelligence alone cannot bring someone success. Their family background and opportunities present also factor in.” He follows that with paraphrased information from the text clearly explaining the evidence Gladwell presents. Then he introduces a well-chosen quote from the text and cites it correctly. He concludes the paragraph by explaining the evidence and how it relates to his claim. Nathan also writes a good claim and provides a nice paraphrased explanation from the text. However, he does not embed his quote, and the quote does not clearly flow out of the information before or after it. His analysis at the end is worded somewhat unclearly. The main problem with Alex’s response is the lack of a clear claim. He also does not provide enough context for a person who has not read *Outliers* to understand, so he does not explain the context for the claim. He does, however, provide a well-chosen quote that illustrates Gladwell’s position, but does not cite it correctly. His paragraph ends with information that could have been used to state Gladwell’s claim. The students who attended class all demonstrated a growing ability to integrate and analyze sources. Their progress was impressive.

However, only half the class attended that day, only two made up the assignment, and I have no way of knowing how the other students would have done. Even more concerning, students missed the discussions where we practiced the skills as well. Therefore, while the discussions do seem to help the students who attend, the growing absences are making it difficult to increase participation. The Full examples from all participants can be found in Appendix G.

### **Student reflections on the efficacy of discussions during Unit Two. 18**

students submitted Unit Two reflections. Overall, the students perceive the class discussions as having a positive influence on their learning. Like during Unit One, the students discuss how they are becoming more confident, learning more about who they are as a person, and are feeling more comfortable sharing their opinions with others. One notable change was that students were beginning to critically reflect on how the class ideas were shaping how they think. For example, one noted, “I’ve been putting more thought into actions and interactions, how something simple can be deep and something complex can be interesting.” This time, the students seem to be noticing that there is a relationship between the class discussion skills and writing. Another stated, “Our discussions are helping me think deeper into my writing. It is a great tool to use to help students practice their writing.” One student summarized all the aforementioned ways the discussions were helping by writing:

“Our discussions have helped me:

- Become more outspoken and assertive with my thoughts and ideas
- Overcome my fear of meeting and speaking to new people
- Gain a vast amount of knowledge about English composition that I will undoubtedly use both during my college career and throughout my entire life”

### **Unit Three: Discussions and the Impact of Attendance**

In the first unit, I aimed to build a comfortable environment for class discussion. During Unit Two, I focused increasing the participation in the small group discussions. The unit reflections revealed that students did believe that the discussions were useful, and the students were participating. However, after fall break the classes began to be plagued by absences, which hurt the quality of the



discussion participation. Therefore, in Unit Three I decided to combine groups to improve discussion participation for the students who did attend. When I reviewed my research journal, I realized that even on the last day of Unit Two the students still needed small group support to successfully engage in whole group discussion.

I wrote:

I asked two questions about the stages of expository writing without small group discussion and students didn't know. I was curious how they would do after all our practice. They don't do well with on the spot questioning. When they discussed in small groups, I gave the directions that they should all discuss their responses so that anyone I called on could answer. After discussion, nearly every person knew an answer.

Based on that reflection and the efficacy of the discussion protocol I used during Unit Two, I followed the same participation protocols. Table 12 shows the participation during Unit Three on discussion days. One significant detail, the chart does not show students who did not participate in the study, but my choices at the time were based on total student attendance.

Participants by Group		Unit Intro: Claims	Types of arguments	Chapters 6 & 7	Chapters 8 to End	Total Absences:
1	Felicity					0
	Cathy					1
	Jacob					12
2	Caitlin					5
	Luke					10
	Leia					13
	Gilly					4
3	Amy					2
	Emily					1
	Becky					6
4	Nathan					6
	James					0
	Alex					2
NP	Brendan					4
	Betty					4

Green = Exceeds; Orange = Meets; Blue = Low  
 NP = At tables with non-participants

The participating students met or exceeded the participation standard on the days they were present. However, they were not as verbally engaged. Towards the end of the semester, the students started talking less in their groups. I wrote:

I can't say that anyone was distracted or disengaged, but there wasn't a lot of talk. Instead, they were searching the book for answers. Some did not read prior to class.

The students were focused and on task, but there was less discussion overall. When I asked the students how they were doing, they said, "tired and stressed out." They told me they were worried about finals and finishing the semester. Overall, combining the groups and following the participation protocols helped for the students who did attend class. However, the frequent absences hurt the overall quality of the class discussions.

**Unit Three discussion goal: Discussions of how authors construct and support claims.** The discussion goal was once again tied to the writing goal. The

discussion goal was: *Students will be able to discuss how authors construct and support claims.* The small group discussions of *Outliers* were used as the intervention for this goal. Prior to starting the unit, I chose Chapter 6 and 7 responses as the formative assessment. The Chapter 6 and 7 assignment was designed to analyze *Outliers* as an argument. As a group, the students were asked to construct a response to five argument related questions. I asked the students to take turns recording the answers. The day we discussed Chapters 6 and 7, only 10 participants were present. I combined table groups so that each table had 3 or 4 students. We followed the same discussion protocol used during previous unit. The students had time to work on the answers as a small group, and then I would call on a group member to share their response for the table. Then, I would ask the other tables to add to the first table's answer.

During this discussion, the students were quieter than in earlier book discussions, but intensely focused. The students were actively searching the book for the answers, and when I visited with the tables I discovered some had not finished the reading prior to class. Several students shared that they their workload was increasing and they were feeling stressed out about finals. I was proud that they stayed focused and dedicated, even if they were not talking as much as before. After class I collected their answers, chose two questions, #1 and #5, to examine, and coded the responses to look for how well the students showed critical thinking that addressed the discussion goal. The unit focus is construction and support of claims.

Contrasting the tables’ responses is a useful way to demonstrate the differences.

Each table’s response to the question is shown in Table 13. The full analysis can be found in Appendix H.

Table 13. Author’s Use of Claims		
In chapter six, Gladwell introduces an argument regarding the “culture of honor”? What is his claim? How does this relate to his primary claim regarding success?		
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b>	<b>3. Betty, Emily, Brendan</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell’s claim in Chapter six is that, “Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They have deep roots and long lives...they play such a role in directing attitudes and behavior that we cannot make sense of our world without them” (175). This relates to his primary claim because cultural legacies ultimately factor into one’s ability to become successful.	Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They persist, generation after generation, virtually intact, even as the economic and social and demographic conditions that spawned them have vanished.	He says that cultural background will influence your personality today. Culture and heritage is one of the outlying factors that leads to success.
Key: Orange = analysis of writing; yellow highlight = evidence given to support analysis		

Table 1 showed the same level of strong thinking demonstrated in previous discussions. Felicity used evidence, cited correctly, to form the claim and then explained how this claim tied to Gladwell’s overall claims about the nature of success. Without specific instructions to include evidence from the text and cite it, Tables 3 and 4 did not support their ideas clearly with evidence from the text. Table 3 provided the weakest response to the question. The answer, though nicely worded, does not address how the claim in chapter six relates to Gladwell’s overall claims.

The next day, the classes had their final discussions over *Outliers*. Because these were the final discussions of the book, I decided to code these responses as well to determine how well students demonstrated critical thinking skills throughout the book discussions (Table 14). The Tables that day were somewhat

different, and three of the groups from the previous units were represented. The questions were similar to the questions asked in Chapters 6 and 7 (Appendix F). To show the students' critical thinking, compare the table responses to the following question:

Table 14. Final Book Discussions.		
Discuss Marita's experiences in chapter nine. How does her example work with Gladwell's previous arguments? How does Gladwell use pathos and logos to strengthen his claims?		
1. <b>Felicity, Cathy</b>	3. <b>Emily, Becky, Amy</b>	4. <b>Alex, James, Nathan</b>
<p>Marita was a child who was born into poverty; however, she was given a chance to escape it and get a good education which led to her being able to develop her mind. Her example works with Gladwell's previous argument because when she was given a chance to get a good education, she had to work incredibly hard to become good at what she studied. Gladwell notes, "she will get up at five-forty-five in the morning...and do homework until eleven at night" (267). That shows unbelievable dedication. He uses pathos when he describes Marita's difficult circumstances and how she fought to overcome them through meaningful work. Gladwell uses logos when he incorporates the data tables depicting the results of what happens during the school year versus what happens over summer vacation. This shows how the poor kids excelled more than the rich kids due to their hard work and perseverance.</p>	<p>Marita just needed a chance, and it explained to her the miracle of meaningful work. To become a success, Marita wakes up really early and stays late working on homework, only to follow the same routine the next day. Gladwell demonstrates how the achievement gap is due to summer break and allows months of schooling to be undone.</p>	<p>Marita has to wake up really early and stay up late at night to do homework, she doesn't have the time to talk with her mom or friend. The extra time that Marita and other KIPP students put in for standing makes them more productive students, if given a chance kids in low income families will be able to be very successful in life. He use pathos by talking about Marita's life and how her involvement with KIPP made her a great student. And uses logos by discussing about differences in American and Asian schools, the importance of hard work is very crucial in their culture.</p>
Key: Orange = analysis of writing; yellow highlight = evidence given to support analysis		

All the groups construct thoughtful responses that show a strong understanding of the text. Table 1 skillfully pulls together all the elements practiced during the semester. The response provides as clear claim that is clear connected to Gladwell's argument, well chosen evidence that is correctly cited, and good examples of the rhetorical appeals. Table 4 lacks the specific evidence from the text, but the response clearly answers every part of the question, and shows a good

understanding of how claims and rhetorical appeals work together. Full discussion responses can be found in Appendix G.

**End-of-course reflections on the efficacy of discussion.** 28 students submitted end of course reflections on the final day of class. 9 students discussed how they were growing as a writer and/or gaining confidence in their writing because of the discussions mentioned growing as a writer. One wrote, “The discussions give me confidence in my writing. I feel better about having to write in other classes now from building confidence in comp.” Another wrote about how they still struggle with sharing out loud, “but through papers I’ve been able to express my ideas and get them fully together to get my point across.” 9 students discussed gaining confidence in their ability to share their opinions during discussions. One wrote, “Our discussions are helping me to come out of my shell and become more outspoken and confident.” 3 more mentioned self-discovery. One said, “I feel more open about my likes and about myself then I did in the beginning of the semester. Writing the code allowed me to really learn about myself.” Finally, 7 students discussed the value of hearing other perspectives. One student wrote, “They show me the ideas of all my classmates, and that makes me think about how everyone else thinks.” 3 students did express negative opinions. 2 said the discussions did not help shape them as writers or college students, and 1 said they despise writing.

### **Blogging Discussion: Establishing an Online Learning Community**

Through conducting my study, I sought to understand the efficacy of dialogic instruction to improve discussion. With that in mind, I set the course goal,

*“students will increase participation in class discussions.”* Due to the blended nature of the course, the students participated online discussions in addition to those held in class. Therefore, student blogs and corresponding weekly discussions were used to assess discussion in an online setting. The students were required to write two blog posts related to our study of *Outliers*. The students signed up for two weeks as bloggers. On the weeks they blogged, the students were asked to post their blog on Friday night, and then to monitor the discussion over the weekend. On the weeks they were not the blogger, they were asked to actively participate in blog discussions by commenting 3 or more times. Prior to asking the students to write blogs, I modeled blog writing by writing the first two blog posts and by monitoring the first discussions. Throughout the class, I sent students reminders two weeks and then one week before the date they were assigned to blog. The email reminders contained instructions for accessing the blog, the blog assignment prompt, and the rubric. I also reminded students they were responsible for monitoring the discussion over the weekend. Each Friday, I reminded the entire class to participate in the blog discussions over the weekend. At the end of the course, the blogs and blog participation were assessed using the blog rubric. That being said, for the purpose of this study I only analyzed how the blogs worked to encourage student discussion. Once again, my analysis was constricted by the lack of participants in Section One. Although many of the students in Section One who chose to participate in the study were active bloggers, I could not find discussion threads containing just participants from the class to follow. Therefore, I chose to illustrate the findings using examples from Section Two.

The second day of class, I wanted to set the students up to succeed at online discussions by ensuring the students understand how to use Blackboard and how to respond to a blog. Blackboard is the technology interface the college uses. Each class has its own “shell” or webpage that professors can use to communicate with students. In blended classes like my ENG 1113 classes, instructors are required to offer some kind of learning activity on the day they do not meet in person. The learning offered online is expected to be similar activities students would experience in person. On Fridays, I expected the students to engage in some kind of discussion about the material we are learning. The first year that I taught blended classes I used the discussion board embedded in Blackboard. However, I was never satisfied with that discussion tool. The discussions felt forced and few students participated. On my course evaluations and/or in class end-of-course reflection, the students mentioned not liking the discussion boards and not feeling like they were useful. Therefore, I decided to try something new for Fall 2016. I researched using blogs in FYC and discovered that research shows that blogging can be effective and even empowering for novice writers (Smith, 2008).



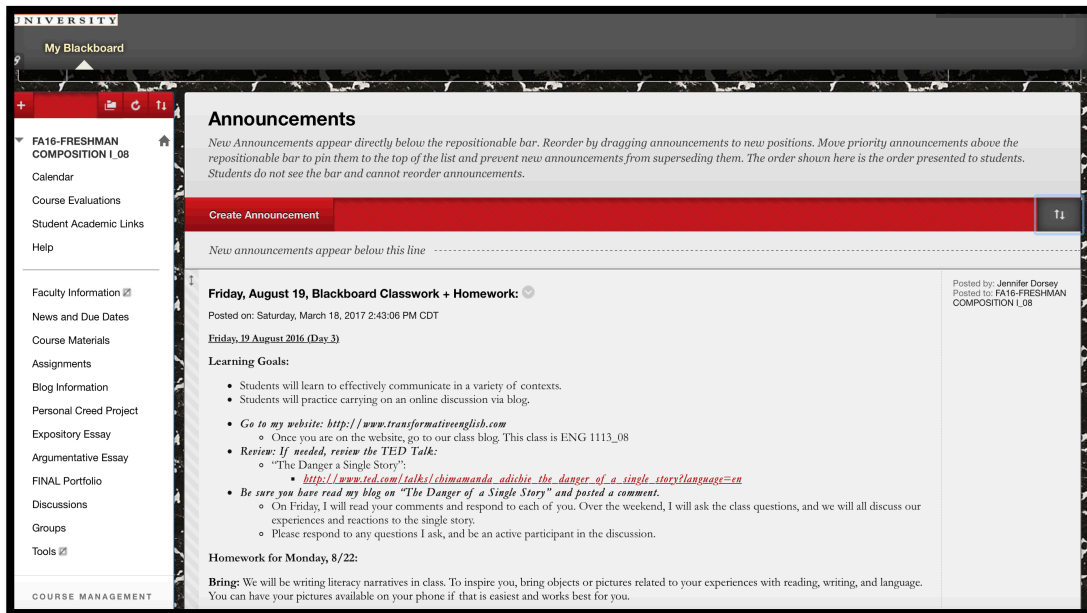
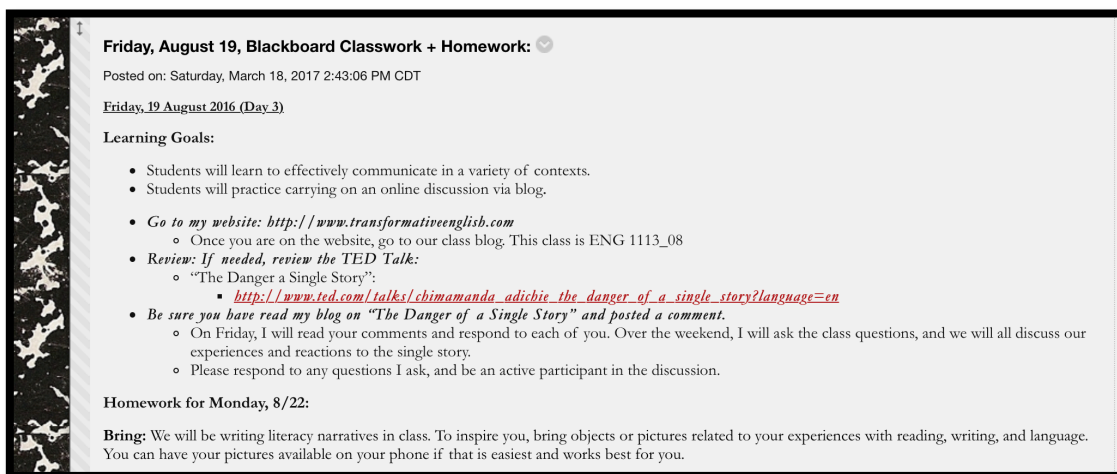


Figure 12. Freshman Composition’s Blackboard Homepage

Most of the students were new freshman and had not used Blackboard before. I learned the first class most of the students have never blogged before either. Prior experience had shown me that students do not seem to internalize how to use Blackboard when I demonstrate it using the projector in class. Smith (2008) reminds that new college students are experiencing a huge change, and so instructors need to be mindful that the shift to online learning creates an additional challenge. One of my colleagues told me that she always takes her students to the computer lab and walks them through all the steps, so I asked the students to meet me in the computer lab. I started class by showing students where to go to log on to Blackboard, then asked the students to log onto Blackboard and spend some time exploring the site to find out where all the course materials were located. I helped students who were struggling to log on, and answered questions about the course set up on Blackboard (see Figure 12).

After all the students logged on and had a chance to explore the webpage, I asked the students to go to the course announcements and read the assignment I had created for Friday. I explained to the students that each Friday, they would log onto Blackboard and read the assignment posted in the announcements (Figure 13). In most cases, they would be instructed to go to the class blog, and showed them how to access the class blog using the tab in the left hand menu. “Today,” I told them, “you will be working on your actual assignment for Friday.” I explained that they should each go to the website, read the blog I posted in response to Ms. Adichie’s TED Talk, “The Danger of a Single Story,” which was embedded in the blog, and respond in the comments (Adichie, 2009). I told them that on Friday I would respond to each of their comments and that over the weekend they should write me back.



**Friday, August 19, Blackboard Classwork + Homework:**

Posted on: Saturday, March 18, 2017 2:43:06 PM CDT

Friday, 19 August 2016 (Day 3)

**Learning Goals:**

- Students will learn to effectively communicate in a variety of contexts.
- Students will practice carrying on an online discussion via blog.
- *Go to my website:* <http://www.transformativeenglish.com>
  - Once you are on the website, go to our class blog. This class is ENG 1113\_08
- *Review: If needed, review the TED Talk:*
  - “The Danger a Single Story”:
    - [http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda\\_adichie\\_the\\_danger\\_of\\_a\\_single\\_story?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en)
- *Be sure you have read my blog on “The Danger of a Single Story” and posted a comment.*
  - On Friday, I will read your comments and respond to each of you. Over the weekend, I will ask the class questions, and we will all discuss our experiences and reactions to the single story.
  - Please respond to any questions I ask, and be an active participant in the discussion.

**Homework for Monday, 8/22:**

**Bring:** We will be writing literacy narratives in class. To inspire you, bring objects or pictures related to your experiences with reading, writing, and language. You can have your pictures available on your phone if that is easiest and works best for you.

Figure 13. The Blackboard Assignment for Friday, August 19.

Then, I helped each of the students find the class blog, and as needed, I showed them how to post comments. I felt like this went extremely well. For the first time, I felt confident the students all knew how to use Blackboard and also how to complete their first online assignments. On Friday, I went in and responded to each of the students using an Elbowesque strategy. Because I wanted to encourage discussion, I needed to do more than just respond. So, my strategy was to make a content-based comment in reply to something the student said, and then asked the student a question to invite further discussion. In my blog I discussed the first time I remember interacting with people who were different than me—the first time my single story of reality was challenged. I wrote:

When I listen to Ms. Adichie’s story, I think back to the first time my own single story was confronted. I was twelve, and my parents had just moved our family from the bastion of Mormonhood, Provo, Utah, to Phoenix, Arizona. I was terrified to start 7th grade in Phoenix. Having lived my entire life in the safe ‘bubble’ of my faith, I had never interacted with non-believers. (\*\*If you are curious about how Provo, Utah, girls are perceived, watch the video at the bottom of the page. It presents a rather amusing 'single story.')

When my mom dropped me off for my first day at Desert Hills Junior High dressed in my homemade red print shorts, gold vest, and puffy hair, I was immediately out of place. These kids looked sophisticated, stylish, and different. Everyone looked so strange and scary, I was absolutely convinced that my peers were going to drag me off into a corner to show me how to curse and drink and fornicate.

Needless to say, I didn’t fit in. My first couple months I was teased incessantly. One day I will never forget my peers discovered in English class that I didn’t know any swear words. I have no clue how the conversation got started, but I distinctly remember feeling surrounded and alien as my classmates spouted out terrible words and asked me what they meant. I could feel myself turning red and sinking lower and lower into my desk. Tears started to form at the corners of my eyes, and still the wording kept coming. I felt like a thing to them, not a person. Their teasing and mistreatment convinced me that my story of them was the true one. And so bereft of friends in my real world, I retreated to my fictional friends and hid behind my books. For that first year, I was convinced no one there could understand me—that no one cared about my story.

I can't help but wonder how much better my life would have been if I had been able to see beyond my single story of my "heathen" peers and reach out to connect, or if they had been able to see beyond their vision of bumpkin me and tried to learn more about where I came from. With these ideas in mind, I'd like to invite you to consider one or more of the following:

- What ways have 'single stories' impacted your life?
- Have you ever been judged by a single story?
- Has your singular vision of another group every been challenged?
- Why can it be important to share our stories and experiences with each other?
- Do you think you have to be a wonderful writer for your story to matter?

When I logged in on Friday, I discovered that all the participating students had responded. The majority of the students replied directly to me, and the majority of the students responded in the truncated way like Betty:

**Betty:** The sharing of single stories and experiences in our lives, has somewhat of an impact on others. It could be important to share a story or experience with another person for the reason of knowledge for that subject. For example, all my life I have moved states all over with my family, Oklahoma being my longest residency. I could share my story of moving to a person who has a future of moving states. It will help them have an understanding of the subject and hopefully prepare them for what is to come.

**Me:** You make a good point about how we can use our stories and experiences to help people who are going to face similar experiences. As someone who moved a lot, did you find any times or ways you saw 'a single story' impact you?

Betty never wrote back. It felt like an auspicious start. I tried to make sure the students felt "heard and understood" (Elbow, 2000, p. 31) but not judged to encourage conversation, however, only approximately 50% even responded to my questions. 5 students did carry on conversations in two separate discussion threads. There was one thread where 3 students replied to the first student in addition to my

own comments. In addition, there was an entire separate conversation between 2 different students. Here is the full exchange between 2 participants:

**Felicity:** Two weeks before the beginning of my senior year of high school, I got three tattoos. Two of them were quotes that truly resonated within my heart, and one of them was a pair of angel wings that represented the fact that I had, in the words of Atticus Finch, conquered my demons and wore my scars like wings. Now, with that being said, I started my senior year. As soon as the word spread that I had tattoos, many people developed a stereotype of me, a "single story". A great number of people immediately began to think that I was bad, dangerous, or a trouble maker. However, that was definitely not the case.

**Emily:** I understand where you are coming from, I got a tattoo at the end of the school year before my high school graduation. The guy I was dating at the time told me he was happy for me, we hadn't been dating for very long, but after I got it he told me he thought he could prevent me from getting it. So he ended things with me, because I got a tattoo. The tattoo I got was in memory of my older brother, who passed in 2012. It was easier for me to walk down the aisle at graduation with it, knowing he was there with me. It really upset me knowing he based me off of this one tattoo, and thought of me less just because I have a tattoo.

**Felicity:** In my opinion, I believe that the fact that you got a tattoo in memory of your older brother is extremely touching and heart warming. It shows just how much you cared for him and loved him. By getting that tattoo, you made him a part of you forever. Now, no one can take that from you, especially not some guy who would end things with you for such an idiotic reason. So keep your head held high, because that tattoo makes you even more beautiful as a person. It's a part of you now, just like your brother is.

**Me:** I appreciate you sharing your story, and I love that you referenced Atticus Finch. It's wonderful that you found a way to "conquer your demons and wear your scars like wings," and I'm sorry any one judged you for doing something that helped you feel stronger.

Like you, I got a tattoo as part of the process of healing. My sister, who is an artist and art teacher, designed it for me. It says "Know Thyself" in Greek, and it serves to remind me to always have the strength and wisdom to be true to myself. So, I understand how a tattoo can be helpful. I'm curious. Were you able to help some overcome the 'single story' they created about you?

**Felicity:** Hi Ms. Dorsey! Thank you so much for your sympathy and for empathizing with my experience. I think that your tattoo that you got as an aid to your healing process is absolutely beautiful.

Also, to answer your question, yes I was able to help some overcome the "single story" that they created about me. Those who were curious enough to ask about them actually ended up understanding my reasons for getting them. I explained to them the different struggles that I had been through and was currently going through, and by doing so, I made some new friends!

I was hesitant about sharing something so personal with the students so early in the class, especially when it does carry a societal stigma. However, I was touched by how the young ladies were bonding over their shared experience—which is what I hoped the students would do, bond by sharing their stories. So, I decided the least I could do is take a risk myself. It seemed like the choice was helpful for at least this young lady who said she appreciated me “empathizing” with her. These young ladies saw the blog as a place where they could “critically discuss topics by interacting” through our class online community (Loncar, Bennet, & Lie, 2014, p. 94).

Despite these small victories, the first week of blogging was not fully successful. The second week I wrote a class blog inspired by “Me Talk Pretty” by David Sedaris, which we read in class and discussed as an exemplar of a literacy narrative. I used Sedaris’s story as an inspiration for my own literacy narrative. To try and bolster participation, in addition to the guided questions at the end of the blog, I provided helpful hints on responding effectively:

When you respond, try to refer to specific details from the story. This helps give readers a frame of reference for understanding your ideas and helps situate them in your story. It also helps remind the reader of the events that inspired your response. Remember, details help bring ideas to life! For example, if you wanted to discuss Sedaris’ use of random letters to represent words he didn’t understand, you might say the following:

“When Sedaris wrote ‘meimslsxp’ and other random letters for words he didn’t understand, it reminded me of the time I tried to buy curry ingredients at a neighborhood market in Delhi...”

This week, the students were expected to respond from home on Friday and carry on the conversation over the weekend. When I logged in on Friday and notice only a few participants had commented, I posted a friendly reminder encouraging the students to engage in conversation with each other. By the end of the weekend, 15 participating students responded. While 5 only wrote once, 9 carried on short discussions with each other. For example:

**Emily:** I have never experienced a foreign language class, we didn't have them where I went to high school. But during my 8th grade year, I was in Science class, and we took notes for our chapter test, which was the next day. I forgot all about the test, when science class arrived the next day I had not studied one bit. My friend and I sat on the opposite side of the room as the teachers desk, so my friend said we could share answers during the test so that I would pass. I was so afraid I would flunk the test, that I agreed. I ended up passing the test by cheating, and my teacher never found out, and I never told him. I am afraid of how my teacher would have looked at me if he ever found out, to this day I feel bad about it still.

**Me:** Thanks for sharing--It's crazy how we can make poor choices due to fear, especially if we think our grades or our future will be harmed as a result. I'm sorry you still feel bad, but did the experience help you remember to study in the future so you wouldn't be in that position again? Or was there any other kind of positive result?

**Emily:** Yes, I definitely learned better study habits because of this mistake! I definitely did not want to be back in that position, so I had to change things in my life.

**Becky:** I've had the same experience in a math class. I've never been very good at math so my friend shared her answers with me. Afterwards I felt so guilty but I couldn't fail the test so I didn't speak up. If I could go back I wouldn't have cheated but nothing can change the past. How did it affect your studying habits?

**Emily:** Well, I was so afraid that I would put myself in that situation again, that it showed me I should study. It taught me that if I don't earn the good grade on my own, then I shouldn't get the good grade. So it taught me to be successful you have to put in the work.

Even though all the students were not discussing, I was somewhat encouraged to see that more students were starting to talk to each other and asking each other questions instead of directly responding to me. In this case, the students both share their experiences with cheating in a conversation thread with each other. I also noticed that some were responding were using my response pattern by addressing the topic and then inviting future discussion by asking a question. For example, Becky's response to Emily mimics my response pattern. She shared an experience when she cheated in math class, and empathizes with Emily's feelings. Then, she asks a question that asks Emily to clarify how the experience impacted her study habits. I hoped with time and practice the conversations would extend and more students would engage.

After modeling blog writing and discussion moderation for two weeks, the task of writing and moderating blogs switched to the students who took turns writing blogs for the rest of the semester. The students were given the following instructions:

Directions: Throughout *Outliers*, Gladwell explores ideas of success and the characteristics of successful people. Likewise, through your blogs you will explore concepts introduced by Gladwell.



On the full assignment sheet (Appendix E), the students were given four topics as inspiration and encouraged to suggest additional blog topics. The students each signed up to write a blog and moderate discussion two times during the semester.

**Blog participation and efficacy at evoking discussion.** Throughout the semester, I monitored blog participation (Table 15). I posted weekly reminders to participate on Blackboard. During the first unit, student online discussions were somewhat effective. 16 participants met or exceeded at blog participation during the unit by posting more than 3 times a week on a regular basis. However, during the second unit, student online discussions were less effective. Like the attendance in class, attendance during Friday blogging decreased throughout the semester. Concerned about the decreasing participation, at the end of Unit Two, I changed the blogging requirements by allowing students to write blogs about anything they wanted. I was worried the conversation was lagging because everyone was writing about topics inspired by the book, and I hoped that new topics might result in increased engagement. I also began participating in discussions. Only 11 participants met or exceeded at blog participation during the unit. Truly worried, I started reminding students that blogging counted as a full 15% of their grade, the same as their major essays.

The final two weeks, I tried to encourage a big final push:

As we enter the last two weeks of blogging, I wanted to post a couple reminders. First, write your name as a byline in your blog post. I can't grade your blog without your name. Please, go in and make sure you have a name on each post. More importantly, please make sure you posted two blogs. Together, your two blogs are worth 100 points, so please take the assignment seriously. When you blog, you are also supposed to monitor the discussion, so engage with those who comment and ask questions to encourage discussion. Remember, even when you do not post, you need to contribute. Your discussion posting is also worth 50 pts.

If you missed writing a blog, now is your chance to make up for that missing blog. If you haven't been contributing regularly, be an awesome participant the next two weeks. If you have written two blogs and been a regular contributor, keep it up! You want to end strong and get the best grade possible. I'd love to see amazing discussions this weekend! With that goal in mind, I also posted a blog over the video we started, "Can a Divided America Heal?" I can't wait to hear your thoughts.

Remember what I said about conclusions: People remember the last thing they read. I will remember what you write and how you discuss these last couple weeks more than what you said weeks ago, so make it compelling :)

Unfortunately, all efforts to increase blogging participation failed. During the final unit, blogging participation continued to decrease. Only 6 participants met or exceeded the standard the final week of blogging.

Participants		W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Section Two	Felicity	Green	Orange	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Orange
	Cathy	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Jacob	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Caitlin	Blue	Blue	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Luke	Blue	Blue	Blue	Orange	Orange	Blue	Green	Blue	Orange	Blue	Orange	Blue
	Leia	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Gilly *	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Amy	Blue	Blue	Orange	Orange	Green	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Orange	Orange	Green
	Emily	Green	Orange	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Orange	Green	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange
	Becky	Green	Orange	Orange	Blue	Orange	Green	Green	Blue	Green	Blue	Blue	Orange
	Nathan	Blue	Blue	Blue	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	James	Orange	Blue	Blue	Orange	Orange	Green	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Alex	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Brendan	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Betty	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Section One	Laurel	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Blue	Orange	Green	Orange	Blue
	Sarah	Orange	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
	Nick	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
	Henry	Blue	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green	Blue	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Monica	Orange	Green	Green	Orange	Green	Orange	Orange	Orange	Blue	Green	Blue	Blue
	Shea	Orange	Blue	Blue	Orange	Orange	Blue	Orange	Blue	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue

Note: Green = Exceeds; Orange = Meets; Blue = Low  
 \* Gilly was excused from blogging from week 4 to week 10 due to a broken hand.

**Critical thinking, reflection, and blogging.** One of the challenges in To demonstrate what a strong blog looks like, here is an excerpt from one of Becky’s where she used evidence that she included as a link to discuss entitlement:

We are the Millennial Generation, which is often described as the “Me Generation.” In the survey I’ve attached it shows that we tend to think more highly of ourselves and abilities than employers tend to. I personally believe that we are a more self-centered generation that tends to think only of our own benefits rather than the effect of our actions on others. Now, that’s the descriptions for Millennials as a whole, not individually. This isn’t me saying that every person from our generation is selfish and spoiled, but surveys and polls tend to show that Millennials want more flexible job hours, more praise from employers, more phone freedom on the job, and that we’re more coddled. We don’t want to hear things we don’t like and we want praise for even simple things. There’s also polls, though, that show that we’re a more open-minded and accepting generation. No one should be judged simply because they’re from the “Me Generation.”

She asked the following discussion questions:

What are your opinions on entitlement?

Do you believe that this generation is more entitled?

What experiences have you had dealing with entitlement or being criticized because you're a part of the "Me Generation"?

This blog received 22 comments from her peers, which show a strong conversation between the participants. The following is an example of a strong response:

**Emily:** Most people who are older look at our generation with disgust. I have heard how sad, lazy and useless our generation has become. If someone isn't encouraged, how do you expect them to care? I believe our generation has many great qualities. If all we base our generation off of is what the media shows, then no one will see the good that gets done. Our generation has a great opportunity to become incredible and change the world. Personally I am tired of hearing how sad our generation is. Have you heard negative things about our generation also?

In this discussion, the students engaged with each other through discussion and responded to each other's questions. They critically engaged with the idea of entitlement in a way that felt like an actual conversation. They responded to each other by name. When Felicity responded to Emily she began, "Hi Emily, I have also heard a variety of negative things about our generation..." before giving her opinion. She included specific details that show she was listening to the conversation and mentioned the specific topic she is responding to in her comment. Conversations like this worked well and demonstrated the kind of thinking I hoped the blogs would engage.

**End of course blogging analysis.** At the end of the semester, the students received a grade for writing the two required blogs and participating over the course of the semester. Each blog was worth 50 points, and their weekly participation was worth 50 points as well (Appendix E). Participant blogging

success was quite polarized. 8 participants exceeded the standard for blogging and all received an A. These students wrote two strong blogs and met participation requirements. The students who were invested in blogging did well. They wrote thoughtful blogs and engaged in at least adequate discussion over the course of the semester. 1 participant met blogging and participation standards and received a B. However, the rest of the participants were not as successful. 3 participants wrote one blog and participated in some discussions, or wrote two blogs but did not regularly participate. These students received a C. 9 participants failed blogging (Table 16).

Table 16. Blogging End of Course Analysis					
Participants		Blog Discussion	Blog #1	Blog #2	Blog Success
Section Two	Felicity				
	Cathy				
	Jacob				
	Caitlin				
	Luke				
	Leia				
	Gilly *				
	Amy				
	Emily				
	Becky				
	Nathan				
	James				
	Alex				
	Brendan				
Betty					
Section One	Laurel				
	Sarah				
	Nick				
	Henry				
	Monica				
	Shea				
Note: green = exceeds; orange = meets; blue = failed to meet the requirements; grey = missing blog					

Felicity	“I enjoy them tremendously. I like both whole and small group discussions, and both ways help me learn.”
Caitlin	“Class discussion makes me extremely nervous. They don’t really benefit me because I tend to zone out.”
Luke	“Small group work, taking notes, small group discussion.”
Amy	“I enjoy both when all participants are mature and don’t start yelling at each other. It gives me ideas and shows me new points of view.”
Becky	“I like class discussions, but I’m pretty shy.”
Emily	“I prefer small group discussions. I don’t do well with extremely large groups of people.”
Laurel	“Small groups work better for me. My anxiety makes working with others tough, but class discussions do help.”
Sarah	“Class discussions are helpful, but I do not prefer to speak much publicly.”
Monica	“Small group and towards the end come back as a whole. I’m shy.”

Although blogging was not successful at encouraging discussion for all the participating students, those who did blog were actively engaged. When I looked back at the students’ initial writing surveys, I noticed that 7 of the 9 students who succeeded at blogging stated preferences for small group discussion, or expressed hesitation about participating in discussion due to anxiety or shyness (Table 17). Many of these students were not actively involved in class discussions until I instituted discussion protocols, yet they were actively involved in discussing the course ideas online. The students who like whole group discussion and were actively involved in class from the beginning, tended to be less involved as bloggers. Felicity and Amy are the exceptions. Both enjoy whole group discussions and actively engaged in blogging.

**Student perceptions of blogging.** On the Unit One reflection, 1 student named blogging as a most useful experience, but 4 students felt that the blog responses were not useful, and that was the only item that was mentioned as not being a useful experience by more than one person. One said, “Blogs were useful, but not as much as the rest of the assignments.” Unit Two, one student named blogs as one of the most useful, and another said it was the least useful. The student who felt blogging was useful enjoyed discussions in general. This person wrote, “I enjoyed doing group discussions and really like learning about ekphrasis. I also really liked blogging.” On the End of Course Reflections, blogs were only mentioned 3 times by students who did not feel they were useful.

### **Students Evolving Writing Practices**

The three major writing assignments were personal, expository, and argumentative essays. Each project was chosen to teach a series of scaffolded writing skills in an engaging manner that encouraged reflection. The personal writing unit was adapted from Creger (2004), Personal Creed project. The project encouraged students to reflect on the experiences, influences, and values that shaped their identity through a series of reflective journals. The students used the journals to write a 3-4 page paper that illustrated their personal creed, a statement describing their values and how their values are reflected in their life. In their paper, they used ekphrasis and tropes to bring their storied examples to life (Appendix A). After the students reflected on their past and developed goals, the students were asked to explore their future successes through the expository essay. The expository unit paper asked the students to richly describe and then analyze a

discourse community that might play a role in their future. This assignment was based on Wardle and Dowd (2014) discourse community assignment. In the paper, students used primary and secondary sources to analyze aspects of membership in the community. The final paper asked the students to apply the research skills they learned in the previous unit to analyze an arguable topic and form a position (Appendix B). The argumentative paper asked the students to choose an arguable topic related to their chosen major, research the topic to develop an informed position, and then argue the opinion using the research as support (Appendix C). While the students did receive a grade on each major essay, the final portfolio encouraged them to continue revising. At the end of the course, the students submitted original and revised drafts of all their major papers. In addition to the grade for the portfolio itself, the students could also receive additional points on each essay due to the quality of their revisions. As part of the final portfolio, the students also submitted a reflective paper analyzing their work and growth over the semester.

The writing goals for each unit correlate with the unit discussion goals. I selected a formative writing assignment in each unit to check student progress toward achieving the writing goal. In Unit One, the discussion goal asked the students to discuss ekphrasis and tropes. Similarly, the Unit One writing goal was, *“Students will be able to integrate ekphrasis and tropes in their writing.”* In the Personal Creed unit, the formative assessment was personal creed journal #3, which asked the students to consider their personal strengths and weaknesses. Unit Two, the students discussed how authors analyze and interpret evidence. Therefore, the



writing goal was, “*Students will be able to integrate sources in their writing.*” The formative assessment for the Discourse Community unit was a problem statement analyzing the community and integrating one source. Unit Three, the students discussed how authors construct and support claims. To go along with that goal, the writing goal was “*Students will be able to write claims and support those claims with evidence.*” The formative assessment during the argumentative unit was also a problem statement. This time the statement required they analyze both sides of an issue they are interested in exploring and integrate research to show why the issue exists. At the end of each unit, the anonymous unit reflections also asked students to reflect on their growth as writers. In addition, students also reflected on their writing in the final reflective papers.

At the end of each unit, all student essays were graded and then the rubrics were de-identified and tallied according to categories the writing assessed. The categories were divided into sub-categories based on the criteria for assessment. The notes were used form initial codes related to the research question (Cresswell, 2013). The results were compiled into tables comparing the two classes along with overall results. After the study was completed, participant essay data was likewise analyzed. The full results for all students and participants can be found in Appendices I, J, and K.

To show how classroom practices worked to produce the results, throughout the findings I use my research journal, field notes, and student artifacts to narrate how classroom dialogic writing practices and interventions worked to produce the results. Because of the large number of artifacts makes a full narrative exploration

of all the findings challenging, and exemplar was chosen for each assignment. For the major essays, the exemplar had to exceed the standard for the chosen trait by the end of the unit. Because I wanted to illustrate student writing in relation to my practices, the student who wrote the exemplar also had to have good attendance (6 absences or less; the number I require for full participation credit in the course syllabus). Although there were students who achieved good results who did not regularly attend class, these students had unique complications that make it hard to use their essays as illustrative cases.

**Unit one goals: Integration of ekphrasis and tropes into writing.** At the same time the students worked through their small groups to understand how professional authors use ekphrasis and tropes in their writing, they also began working towards their own writing goal, *students will be able to integrate ekphrasis and tropes in their writing* by practicing adding these elements into their own writing. Because I used Elbow's map to guide instruction, much of the early writing was personal, and the students did not need to share it or turn it in. The main way I interacted with the student writing was through the formative assessment, their personal creed journals, a series of guided journals aimed at helping them analyze their influences and develop a statement of who they are and what they stand for (Appendix A).

For example, Personal Creed Journal #3 asks the students to explore their own qualities. The directions read:

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” Today, I’d like you to examine ‘what lies within’ you in order to better understand how your own qualities contribute to your successes:

1. Create a list of **your own qualities** that may have helped you become the person you are today and might help you--or might make it difficult for you to--become the person you wish to be.
2. After you write your list, circle your three to five most significant qualities.
3. Write a paragraph about each of the qualities or traits you circled. Describe a situation when this quality came out in you. Explain how this quality is significant in your life. Explain how this quality has contributed to your successes (and/or failures).

The students submitted the journals electronically on Blackboard, and on each of the journals I responded to the student by responding and sometimes, positively commenting. For example, consider this excerpt from Monica’s Personal Creed #3 along with my response:

**Monica:** My biggest downfall is probably that I just easily don’t believe in myself. I’ll never be good enough to be a teacher, because I am super shy. I’ll never be a good enough writer, because I don’t know grammar or comma placement. I’ll never own my own bar, because I don’t have the ambition or the money to do that. I have no ambition. I just kinda wing everything. My motto is *if you can wing eyeliner then you can wing anything*. The second I see a roadblock I give up and go home. I don’t try and fix it or work around it. I just simply give up.

**My Response:** Thank you for sharing! I could feel such a strong voice in your words. I love your eyeliner motto! In a lot of ways, it sounded like you were discussing the "imposter syndrome." When people enter new and challenging environments, there is this tendency to think we don't belong, or aren't good enough. I know I felt that way when I started graduate school--I was POSITIVE everyone in my classes were geniuses who knew far more than me about English. I felt that way until I confessed my feelings to another student who told me, "We are all faking it, Jennifer." That blew my mind. I realized we all have doubts that plague us. What matters is how we face our doubts :)

Similarly, on each student's journal, I tried to write something encouraging so they would know I was listening to their words and cared about their opinions. The only negative feedback I ever gave was to encourage students who wrote short responses, like only one paragraph when the assignment called for three, to expand and work on showing their story. Eventually, the students used these reflective journals to write a paper elucidating their fully developed creed (Creger, 2014).

At the end of the unit, the students participated in two days of peer revision. The students were asked to bring their full draft, and instructed to bring an excerpt to share if they did not feel comfortable sharing their full paper with a small group. The first day did not go well. The students were not prepared and few had drafts. In my research journal I wrote, "Few students had their drafts. Most weren't ready to share. This happened after I returned from being out with the flu. I think the lack of class time hurt. Students were confused." Because I was sick, there had been a week gap in instruction. I clarified expectations with the students and shared a model personal creed that I wrote telling how I learned my values while building a doghouse with my dad. Once again, I reminded the students that they could bring an excerpt to share. After peer review, I told them we would also complete a self-

review activity for the entire draft. The second day we used a revision activity, “I heard, I noticed, I wondered.” The revision activity was chosen because it encourages positive feedback instead of criticism. A shortened form of the directions is included below. The full activity can be found in Appendix A:

1. I heard....As a reviewer, first try to summarize what you think the piece is about.
2. I noticed...As a reviewer, tell the author about some of the things that attracted your attention.
3. I wondered...As a reviewer, did you have any questions when you finished reading?

This day went well. Most had drafts, and the students shared feedback on their excerpts in writing using the activity, and then they shared their thoughts through discussion. Finally, the student used the feedback from their peers to reflect on their own writing using similar guided questions. On the due date, in Section One, 5 out of 6 participants submitted personal creed essays. In Section Two, 13 out of 15 participants submitted personal creed essays.

**Writing goal analysis.** To determine how well the participants met the second unit goal, *Students will be able to integrate ekphrasis and tropes in their writing*, the rubrics were de-identified and tallied. The personal creed rubrics were tallied according to category: focus, style, arrangement and revision (Shank, 2002). These major categories were divided into descriptive sub-categories based on the criteria for assessment within each category. The notes were used to form initial codes related to each research question (Creswell, 2013). The style category

contained the criteria to analyze Goal #2. To meet the standard, the essay contains “Ekphrasis tries to draw the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate.” The essay also needed to incorporate “a master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is used where appropriate.” The results were compiled into tables that compare the two classes. The complete results with tables and analysis can be found in Appendix I.

*Ekphrasis.* The students met the writing goal by effectively using ekphrasis in their papers. In fact, the students’ strongest area was style. 17 students met or exceed the standard for style. To illustrate the kind of writing required to exceed the standard, examine this example written by Felicity. Throughout her paper, she paints a picture of a tree and creates an extended metaphor that uses the tree, moving through the seasons, to story her life and values:

A great number of people see the tree’s broad thick trunk and its thriving, vivacious, green leaves, and they assume that the tree is simply an unnaturally resilient element of nature. However, they often fail to realize what’s rest right beneath their feet...the roots. Now just think about how vital they are to the well-being of that tree. How far and wide they span and search to find the essential nutrients that are needed for the growth of its foliage. Without those roots, it would have nothing anchoring it to the ground and providing it with support. If you ponder that thought, then you might come to the same conclusion that I did: people have roots, too. Although our roots are called by a different name: values.

Later in her paper, Felicity describes the challenge she faced:

As a root helps a cherry blossom to rise and flourish into a magnificent work of art, love helps a human heart to become the best version of itself that it could possibly ever be. It’s as constant as the ethereal cycle of seasons. Even though a winter may leave you cold and bare, spring will always come again and warm the bitter air. I went through a winter of my own at the beginning of my sophomore year of high school. The doctors diagnosed me with a disease called anorexia nervosa.

The metaphor of the seasons paints a vivid picture of emotional struggle.

Throughout her essay, Felicity demonstrates mastery at both stylistic elements.

***Tropes.*** The participants were successful at incorporating tropes into their own writing. Even though that was their lowest trait, 13 of them still met the standard. Throughout the unit, incorporating rich details to make the reader feel as though they were there was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the Personal Creed unit. Tropes were described as techniques writers use to enhance the writing and make connections in unique ways. Nathan (MWD) wrote a good example of effectively incorporating a trope. In his paper he used a personality trait, “WOO,” which stands for “Winning Others Over” as an extended metaphor through his paper. He uses the trait to discuss his values and goals.

***Revision.*** 11 participants met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard “The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper. Revision adds minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.” The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts.

**Unit one reflections: Student reflections on the efficacy of writing experiences.** Overall, the unit reflections reveal that the students were able to see the value in learning to write with rich details and incorporate tropes in their writing. One student replied, “I liked learning about ekphrasis because it made me write my essay more detailed.” They talked about these traits as being among the

most useful experiences they learned and recognized that descriptive writing to “make writing relatable” and “keep the reader interested” would play a role in the next unit. The Personal Creed essay was structured to encourage reflection on students’ identities, values, and goals. In the unit reflections, students also discussed how delving into their values and goals could be useful. One expressed that the class is “helping me contemplate where I am in life and where and how to get where I want to be.” Another student discussed how these reflective skills could transfer to the new unit. They said, “The personal creed is a practice writing to find yourself, and for your own opinions. Research papers are your opinions supported by research evidence.” Full examples can be found in Appendix L.

**Unit Two writing goal: Integrating sources in their writing.** The students began working on their expository essays as they were working on Chapter 4 discussions. The students began by writing a 250 word overview describing the discourse community they want to research and why they want to research the community. They were supposed to include a working thesis stating their current perspective. The students posted these overviews on Blackboard. To model this, I wrote an overview describing my desire to join the local yoga community and why I wanted to research the community. We discussed my model in class, and the students gave me feedback. After I approved their topic, the students expanded their overviews into a two-page problem statement. This step was necessary because the English department was piloting problem statement writing as a general education class program assessment for the university. Knowing this, I



chose the problem statement as my formative assessment for this goal. The problem statement directions the department developed read:

Your job is to write a short essay which identifies and analyzes a problem within a topic of your choice. In this essay, you should appeal to your audience, summarize your ideas about the topic, and provide some source support.

Right now, you are constructing a *Problem Statement*. The Problem Statement sets up your research question and provides some source support about the topic you've chosen. In that, it should communicate *what* topic you are working on, generally and specifically, *why* it is worth studying, *who* might be interested and *what* claim(s) you are making about the topic. In other words, you are stating your understanding of the problem/issue you will be writing about and including source support.

Once again, I modeled the expectation by writing a problem statement for my example yoga community paper. We examined my model in class and discussed how I used the elements of expository writing and where I could improve. The students brought their problem statements to the class on our workday in the computer lab. I hoped to ascertain student progress towards meeting our unit goal by individually talking with all the students about their progress.

During the workday I went from student to student discussing their problem statement, what they were currently working on, how they felt about their progress, how I can help them, and asked if they had any questions. In my research journal I

noted that most of the students seemed on track, only a couple expressed confusing, and those students were behind and had not even completed their problem statement. Even the students who were behind had found at least one source, but they were not yet confident in how they integrated their sources. Carly's problem statement is a good example that shows the students skills on that day. Carly was writing about her desire to join the pharmacy discourse community. She wrote:

Pharmacy and pharmacists are a discourse community for several reasons. They have a common goal: to prevent and treat infectious diseases. They have their own language whether it be medicine terms or reading doctors prescriptions in Latin. I did some research online and found a website called NCPA which stands for National Community Pharmacist Association. This association holds meetings and conferences. They have a multitude of mission statements but the one that I believe means the most says "We are committed to high-quality pharmacist care and to restoring, maintaining, and promoting health and well-being of the public we serve." I can't wait to become apart of this association soon and for all the things the world of pharmacy will provide me.

Carly's problem statement shows a good understanding of her community. She can explain the features that make it a discourse community, and sets up how she will examine her community throughout the paper. She includes a source to support her ideas, describes the source, and introduces a direct quote. However, she does not cite the source correctly in MLA format after the quote. Like Carly, the majority of the students who had problem statements were doing a good job describing their communities, but their understanding of citation was erratic. In fact, when I touched base with the students, the majority of the questions the students asked were about citation. I reassured them we have a citation workshop in class on Monday.

Unfortunately, many students were absent from both classes. I noted in my research journal, “We had a workday and many students were absent. 9 students were absent in my first class. 8 were absent in the second. Many of these were good students, so I wonder if they misunderstood and thought they had time to work at home?” I was beginning to become frustrated with the large number of students who were missing class. It is hard to effectively assess student progress when they do not attend. The students were instructed to complete their drafts over the weekend and bring them to class on Monday for a citation workshop.

On Monday, the classes had a citation workshop with their drafts. As a whole group we reviewed citing interviews, observation, and websites. Then, I had the students individually check their drafts for proper MLA format, their own in text citation, and works cited pages. Next, they paired up and checked a partner’s draft. Finally, we reviewed using evidence and how to embed sources, interpret sources, and form conclusions as a group. Once again, they checked their drafts with a partner. Once again, a many students missed class. In my research journal I discussed my concern that so many students continued to be absent. I wrote, “Lots of students were missing in my first class (8). Only 5 were absent in the second class. Something seems to be going on in this class. It seems to be getting quieter. More students are missing, and they are looking tired.” While many students were absent, the students who attended all brought drafts, and they all actively participated in working through the drafts.

The final day the class had formal peer review. Once again, a large number of students were absent (9 in Section One and 5 in Section Two). Those who did

attend went through a three-cycle peer review process in groups of four. Each reader checked a different aspect of the rubric: invention, style, and arrangement using guided questions. The students had to move to make groups of four. One of my shy students, Becky said, “Oh no! I don’t like new people!” before class when I asked her to move and seemed quite concerned. I made sure to monitor her group throughout the process and check in with her to make sure everything went okay. Both classes were silent and working hard throughout the class. After the final cycle, the 3<sup>rd</sup> reader verbally shared the feedback with the writer. In my journal I noted, “Both classes were silent and working hard. At the end, the 3<sup>rd</sup> reader shared the feedback verbally with the writer. They were asked to share strengths, areas to grow, and questions they still had. It was an excellent class.” Holistically, I felt that the lessons were well constructed and valuable for the students who attended. However, if the saying is true that “people vote with their feet,” it is worrisome that so many students were not in class on the days that were dedicated to getting my individual advice as well as feedback from their peers.

**Writing goal analysis.** To determine how well all the students met the second unit goal, “Students will be able to integrate sources in their writing,” the assignment rubrics were de-identified and tallied. To meet this standard, the essay needs to “attempt to address and analyze the chosen aspects; integrates both primary and secondary sources—some are embedded using attributive tags; explains and/or analyzes how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a way that is based in the explanation or analysis.” The expository rubrics were tallied according the category: invention, style, arrangement, and revision

(Shank, 2002). These major categories were divided into sub-categories based on the criteria for assessment within the category. The notes were used to form initial codes related to the research question (Cresswell, 2013). The results were compiled into tables that compare the classes. The full results and discussion can be found in Appendix J.

***Integrating sources.*** The participants who turned in their essays met the writing goal by effectively integrating sources in their papers. 15 participants met or exceed the standard for style. 15 students met or exceeded at integrating sources. To meet this standard, the essay needs to “attempt to address and analyze the chosen aspects; integrates both primary and secondary sources—some are embedded using attributive tags; explains and/or analyzes how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a way that is based in the explanation or analysis.” Throughout the unit, incorporating sources was emphasized as was the main writing goal for the unit. James used sources particularly well. In his essay he discussed how his grandma got him involved in a food bank community and then analyzed the work done by the organization. He wrote:

People can volunteer for any number of reasons, whether it’s to make you feel good about yourself or because your grandma made you go. We’ve all heard that this generation of kids are selfish and unhelpful, so you might think that there aren’t any young people volunteering at charities. But a study by the U.S. Census Bureau states that as many as “15.5 million teenagers volunteer yearly...with up to 39% being regular volunteers who volunteer at least 12 weeks of the year” (“Youth Helping America” 1), so we know this stereotype is false. It fills me with hope knowing there are so many other teenagers volunteering as well.

James provides a nice lead in that moves from discussing why people volunteer to the numbers of young people involved in volunteer work. He then introduces his

quote by giving the source, which establishes the source's credibility. After his quote, he explains how the quoted information relates to his analysis of volunteer work. Examples from all the participating students can be found in Appendix F.

Another noteworthy finding was that 12 students exceeded in incorporating ekphrasis into their essays. To exceed the "Ekphrasis draws the reader into the essay by bringing examples to life for the reader." While this was not the focus of the unit, it was heartening to see the students grow in the skills from Unit One. This demonstrates that the students are improving in their ability to use a skill the more they practice it. The most interesting finding is the impact absences had on achievement. 5 of the 6 students who did not meet the standard or failed to submit an essay missed class at least 4 days during the unit. Students who attended class all met the standard. Overall, 10 participants received an A or B on the paper itself (not including the points for revision). Of the remaining students, 7 received a C. 2 were required to revise and resubmit. The main reason students received a C was because of a low grade on invention for not including background information.

**Revision.** 17 participants met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard "The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper. Revision adds minor details, help the reader's understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas." The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts.

**Unit Two: Student reflections on the efficacy of writing experiences. 18**

students completed unit reflections for Unit Two. In general students felt that the class experiences were useful. 8 discussed expository essay writing and citation. One wrote, “How to tell it as it is, without it being an argumentative essay.” 3 students noticed the efficacy of peer review. One student replied, “I found the peer workshop activities most useful for learning to write expository essays.” 6 students discussed the value of their prior learning for the new unit. One stated it particularly well saying, “In this unit, I will have to be relying on the logos of other people. Therefore, I will need to use my previous knowledge of citation methods to incorporate their professional statements. In addition, by using ekphrasis and/or trope, I will be able to communicate my message vividly and effectively.”

**Unit three writing goal: Writing claims and supporting claims with evidence.** The writing goal for the argumentative unit was “*Students will be able to write claims and support those claims with evidence.*” I chose the same intervention, problem statement, as my formative assessment for this goal. The students began by taking notes over the structure of an argumentative essay and looking at examples of arguments as a whole group. Then, they practiced constructing claims and counter arguments in small groups. We continued to practice claim and arguments in class the next week using our small group discussions of *Outliers*. Next, the students wrote a problem statement describing the issue they would like to argue along with their primary claim. Because I was attending the NCTE Conference and had to cancel class, the students posted these on Blackboard. Unfortunately, only 12 participants turned in problem statements.

Emily's problem statement explaining why she believes that medical marijuana should be legal illustrates students' typical progress at this stage:

Although it has good and bad side to using the oil, it will affect everyone differently. I believe in the use of cannabis oil to a certain extent, when I was 14 my brother was told he had osteosarcoma (bone cancer) and I would've done anything to help ease his pain, and prevent him from having chemotherapy treatments.

When I go into a store such as Walmart or something similar, and they ask if I would like to donate to St. Jude's Children's Hospital, it break my heart to think about the children suffering from such terrible illnesses. My brother always had his chemo treatments done at OU children's hospital in Oklahoma City. When I would go visit him, I would see these little children hooked up to IV's and these machines. If there is a substance on this earth to prevent the pain for the children, and I agree with it.

**Response:** This is an appropriate and timely topic. Right now, it looks like you have a brief paragraph form outline of your paper. If you expand each section, I think it will work well. In particular, I would work on giving more history. Define cannabis oil and discuss how it works. Lay out why there is an argument concerning using it as a treatment, and then dig into the pros and cons--making sure to emphasis the pros.

Emily has an appropriate topic and a clear position, but her research and writing need development. After receiving online feedback and approval from me, the students were instructed to continue their research over Thanksgiving Break. The day after Thanksgiving Break, the students had a workday in the computer lab. Once again, I moved from student to student checking in on their progress and answering their questions. While only 4 students were absent in Section One, 12 students were absent in Section Two, so I was not able to check in and help those students. The final day of class we had peer review. The peer review activity used was a modified form of Elbow's "I Believe, I Don't Believe." For this activity, the reader reads through the paper one time believing each claim and offering advice to



make the claims stronger. Then, the reader reads the paper doubting each claim and writing down all the arguments they can make against the claim. I asked the first reader to be the believer, and the second reader to be the doubter. After completing the peer review activity, we reviewed the requirements for their final portfolio (Appendix D). The students were submitting their revised argumentative essays in their final portfolio along with revised copies of their previous papers and a writing reflection. The completed portfolio was due during their final exam period.

**Writing goal analysis.** This unit, the paper was assessed as part of the final writing portfolio. To determine how well all the students met the second unit goal, “Students will be able to write claims and support those claims with evidence,” the portfolio rubrics were de-identified and tallied. The portfolio rubrics were tallied according the category: invention, style, arrangement, and revision (Shank, 2002). These major categories were divided into sub-categories based on the criteria for assessment within the category. The notes were used to form initial codes related to the research question (Cresswell, 2013). The results were compiled into tables that compare the classes. The full results and analysis for all the students and participants can be found in Appendix K.

**Writing and supporting claims.** The participants met the argumentative writing goal by effectively writing and supporting claims in their papers. 13 participants met or exceeded the standard for the argumentative essay. To meet the standard, the essay needs to “Makes claims that work together to support your position. Describes counterarguments (objections to the claims) and then refutes them.” Sarah wrote her best paper arguing that music education is vital. Her claims

were particularly strong when argues, “When you look up the phrase: ‘why music should not be taught in schools’ on Google, basically everything that comes up is why it SHOULD be.” After explaining her position, Sarah provides a counter argument and then refutes it. Sarah writes,

Some people believe teaching fine arts is a waste of time. Paying a full-time art or music teacher is a waste of money. Art education favors the artistically-inclined students, and does not leave much room for those who are not the best at those things (Chira). While I understand this argument, let me go into all the academic benefits found in music education.

To support her ideas regarding the academic benefits, Sarah adds: “According to a study done by Nova Southeastern University, ‘music helps you retain information, have better math skills, gain teamwork skills and have confidence.’” Through this passage, she makes a claim, demonstrates she understands the arguments against her position using an appropriate source, and then refutes the argument using evidence for her position.

Unfortunately, 3 participants failed to turn in an argumentative paper (Appendix K). Jacob had stopped coming to class, so it was perhaps not surprising that he failed to turn in a paper. Nathan and Alex, however, had been strong students and active participants. Both young men did not attend class the last week of the semester, but that was the only sign something was wrong. 4 participants did not effectively make persuasive claims throughout the paper. In each case, the main problem was the essay was not long enough or developed enough for the claims to be persuasive. Throughout the unit, writing and supporting claims was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the unit.

**Revision.** The final portfolio rubric had criteria specifically for revision. The criteria stated, “*To what extent is the (essay name) well-revised based on feedback? Do the changes significantly improve the essay?*” The categories were “No Revisions,” “Some,” and “YES!” The students received additional points on their essay grade for revisions, 10 points for some, and 25 for YES! The participants made the most revisions to their expository essays. 15 made at least some revisions, and 7 made extensive revisions. 13 participants made revisions to their personal creed paper. 10 participants made significant changes that dramatically improved the paper. 10 students revised their argumentative essays, with 4 making significant changes. Monica’s revisions to her discourse community essay show the dramatic impact revision can have on student writing:

**Original:** A community that I would love to join would be the Literati club. Literati, according to Merriam-Webster, means well educated people interested in literature” (Merriam-Webster). I, myself, am an English major so I can connect with everyone. However, the first meeting was in September and I missed the meeting because I had work. Since then I haven’t been by to any of the meetings and that saddens me.

**My feedback:** Your essay needs more information and stronger analysis of the organization. You don’t know enough about it to analyze if it will help you achieve your goals—what the club offers etc. I seriously suggest you contact the South West University Professor in charge of the group and interview her.

**Revised:** A community that I would consider to be apart of contains literature lovers or Literati. According to Merriam-Webster, Literati means well educated people in means well educated people interested in literature (Merriam-Webster). Here, at South West University, we have a Literati club which contains “a group of students interested in the literary arts. They support all sorts of functions like the Welcome Back Picnic, Poetry Series, academic speakers, and roundtables. They do not meet regularly, but they usually have about one function a month” (South West University Professor). I, myself, am an English major so I can connect with people who share my same interests.

Monica’s original paper that she submitted at the end of the Discourse Community Unit received a C. She did not meet the standard for integrating sources and using them to analyze a community. Her final draft showed dramatic improvement. In fact, it exceeded the standard. She used the feedback she was given, went out and gathered information from a key primary source, and effectively used the research to revise her paper.

Table 18. Essay Comparison: Original to Revised Essay Grades for Participants

Class	Personal Creed		Expository	
	Original	Revised	Original	Revised
Exceeds	3	10	2	9
Meets	7	8	8	7
Developing	8	3	9	4

Table 18 shows the impact of revisions. When the participants first submitted their personal creed essays, only 3 exceeded the standard. At the end of the semester, 10 exceeded. 7 participants originally met the standard, and 8 met after final revisions. This number also reflects the number of participants who moved from below to meets. 8 participants were below the standard when they first submitted their essays. Only 3 students were still below the standard at the end of the semester. Similarly, 2 participants exceeded on the original expository essay; by the final portfolio, 9 exceeded. 8 participants met on the first drafts, and 7 met at the end. However, only 4 participants were still below the standard on their final drafts. Table 19 illustrates individual student revision accomplishments.

Participants		Original Personal	Revised Personal	Original Expository	Revised Expository
Section Two	Felicity	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Cathy	Orange	Green	Orange	Green
	Jacob	Orange	Grey	Blue	Blue
	Caitlin	Green	Green	Orange	Orange
	Luke	Orange	Orange	Blue	Blue
	Leia	Grey	Blue	Grey	Blue
	Gilly *	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green
	Amy	Orange	Green	Orange	Green
	Emily	Orange	Green	Orange	Green
	Becky	Grey	Green	Green	Green
	Nathan	Blue	Grey	Orange	Orange
	James	Orange	Orange	Orange	Green
	Alex	Blue	Orange	Orange	Orange
	Brendan	Orange	Orange	Blue	Blue
	Betty	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Section One	Laurel	Green	Green	Orange	Green
	Sarah	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
	Nick	Orange	Green	Blue	Orange
	Henry	Grey	Green	Orange	Orange
	Monica	Orange	Green	Blue	Green

Note: Green = Exceeds; Orange = Meets; Blue = Low; Grey = Missing

**End of Course Reflections.** Two questions changed on the end of course reflection. Instead of asking how they saw the ideas from the unit helping in the next unit, the final reflection asked, “*How do you see the ideas in the class helping you in Freshman Composition II? In other college courses?*” Instead of asking what the students would like to learn on the next unit, the end of course reflection asked, “*If you were in my Freshman Composition II class, what would you like to see discussed? What kinds of writing assignments would you like to do?*” The frequencies of responses were tallied (Shank, 2002). These reflections were also segmented by research question, notes were made in the margins, and the notes were used to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013). The responses were compiled into a table that can be found in Appendix L.

**Student reflections on the efficacy of writing experiences.** 28 students completed the end-of-course reflections. In general students felt that the class experiences were useful. The students discussed writing activities they felt were useful. 8 students said that peer review was the most useful activity. One student wrote, “I never realized it until now how much the peer review helps.” 15 students discussed activities that helped them write good essays. One of these students said that the most useful experiences was “writing the essay in sections. When we would write the problem statement then the rest of the paper. It helped me at least.” In addition to the essay structure, these students discussed argumentation. One wrote that learning “how to start an argument in a civilized manner for further discussion” was particularly useful. 14 students discussed writing skills as being the most useful in their future writing classes.

### **Students Ability to Reflect to Critically Think and Reflect on Their Learning**

At the end of the course as part of the writing portfolio, the students wrote a final writing reflection paper. The directions for the writing reflection were included in the portfolio directions. The directions stated:

Write a paragraph describing your reflection and revision process. Write a paragraph discussing how you have grown and changed as a writer over the semester. Conclude with a paragraph assessing your strengths and weaknesses as a writer along with a consideration of how you can use this knowledge to continue to grow throughout college (and/or your career).

The portfolio directions also included guided questions to help them reflect on their writing (Appendix D).

14 participants submitted a writing reflection. The participants were most successful at describing their revision process and growth as a writer. 12 participants did a good job describing both their revision process and growth as a writer. To describe her growth, Laurel wrote, "Before I took this course I was barely able to write a story let alone write a cited paper with correct citations. I have truly enjoyed learning in this course due to the fact that I actually did learn." Cathy showed good insight into her revision of her personal creed. She said, "I did however, realize that in my personal creed statement I was not very descriptive. I feel like it being my first essay I was very closed in revealing my personal life in my essays, but now at the end of class I see that the more personal something is the more it grabs the reader's attention and gets them invested in the story."

The participants also described their strengths and weaknesses well with 11 meeting the standard. Henry described his strengths nicely. He wrote, "My strengths would be that I can get readers attention and that I can relate to them and get them interested in my stories. When you write from the heart or pour everything into your stories I think readers can tell and feel more in tune with what you are trying to say." The one area where they did not succeed was in describing how they will use the knowledge in the future. Only 7 participants did an adequate job. Felicity did a nice job saying how she will use the knowledge in the future. She said, "I plan to become an elementary teacher, and it is an immensely useful skill to be able to explain your thoughts and ideas thoroughly and with ease. That is what this course has taught me to do, and I will always be grateful for that."

Caitlin was one of the participants who expressed a great deal of anxiety about writing and discussion at the beginning of the course. She did a wonderful job discussing how the course impacted her understanding of writing in general. She wrote:

At the beginning of the semester I was extremely nervous about putting my work out there to be judged. My thought process on this was all about criticism, I did not want to let other people that I had never met before be the judge on if my essay was good enough. The fact that it was a requirement was the only reason anyone saw my essays or blogs. I learned that putting my work out there is not a bad thing. People that look over my blogs and essay are not there to judge me, but to help me reach the highest level that I possibly can. I am very thankful that I was pushed out of my bubble because it opened me up and showed me that getting things wrong is not anything to be embarrassed about.



## Chapter 5. Conclusions

Through my research, I wanted to demonstrate my personal commitment to action (McNiff, 2013). I wanted my dissertation to demonstrate my attempt to do something, to make “just one positive life changing action” and make an “improvement, no matter how small” (p. 17). I used action research as a structured way to break my own lines of articulation by engaging in thoughtfully constructed inquiry in order to form new connections through the gaps that emerged. The actions and reflections presented here represent an informed “active and proactive notion of critical self-reflection” through which I sought to examine whether my practices are good, appropriate and just (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 23) and whether I was living my values and beliefs through my practices. Self-study provided an opportunity to translate my theoretical beliefs through personal action with the goal of influencing educational practice (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001). To the best of my ability, I lived the following values through my practices throughout my study:

- Critical reflection will help me become the teacher these student need by reconsidering my identity as teacher in this particular context.
- Strong student-teacher relationships are key to being able to live my values through my practices. My teaching mantra is “relationships matter; students are brilliant; treat them accordingly.”
- Students enter the classroom an assemblage of their past experiences. To help them form lines of flight, I need to understand their lines of articulation and how these lines interact with my own.

- My role as teacher is a mediator of interactions and experiences. Through carefully designed classroom experiences, my students could invent and re-invent themselves as writers and thinkers.
- Embodied learning: Thinking, learning, and reflection are being social, cultural, and political as well as biological, technological, and relational. Embodied learning is mediated through the senses, and new learning is imprinted upon the body. Learning in this definition is an assemblage.

Careful, critical reflection is key to improving instruction (Yagelski, 1999). Self-study action research provides a structured way to reflect in order to enact change (Bollough and Pinnegar, 2001). Therefore, I had to thoughtfully consider how I relate to the students in order to make changes to improve instruction for my students. To make changes that met the students' needs, I needed to include their voices in the process. Action research is a powerful tool for transforming teaching practices with students in part because "action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing that is done with, not on or about people" (Bradbury, 2016, p. 1). I wanted my students become present as active authors in their own world capable of using discourse to shape their realities (Freire, 2001). I hoped they would be cognizant that literacy has powerful transformative potentialities: to become critical thinkers. In particular, I used action research to understand:

To what extent can critical literacy, as taught through the dialogic in a rural setting influence:

- the quality of student discussion?
- students' writing practices?
- students' ability to critically think and reflect on their own learning?

This paper represents my explanation of how I engaged with my students to answer these questions. In the previous chapter, I examined what I discovered through studying my practices: how my practices influenced the quality of student discussion, students' writing practices, and students' ability to critically think and reflect on their own learning. In this chapter, I will discuss how I intend to modify my beliefs and practices in light of what I discovered. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on how this study shaped my understanding of my students and my practice.

### **Student Discussion Practices: What Worked Well**

Dialogic instruction worked to improve student discussion practices by showing students that reading and writing are interrelated activities and by increasing student confidence in their discussion abilities. I aimed to influence discussion practices through my inclusion of a provocative, but not overtly controversial course theme, "How can we be architects of our own success?" Sponenberg (2012) argues that students see and can discuss the stylistic features in a text easier when the text doesn't evoke a visceral response. I hoped an intriguing theme would spur "good and useful and powerful experiences" critically engaging with texts (Gee, 2004, p. 118). I wanted the students to discuss a model text to

explicitly teach students the connections between reading and writing. Furthermore, the theme had to invite discussions that would work to demonstrate that reading could be a tool for understanding writing (Bunn, 2013). Therefore, it was important that the topic be engaging but not fear inducing. My primary intervention to influence student discussions was the use of my modified map of audience and response. The map was modified to include “evaluation of outsider’s writing,” to account for this teaching strategy.

This intervention worked well. Model texts helped students understand the how the author used the writing strategies that were targeted in each unit. The small group responses show that the students demonstrated an ability to respond to *Outliers* as a piece of writing. They discussed how Gladwell used ekphrasis and tropes in the first unit, added forms of evidence in the second, and then focused on his use of claims in the third. Analysis of small group responses show most of the students were able to identify places Gladwell used a writing technique and analyze how Gladwell incorporated the technique to produce an effect. Furthermore, students perceived the text-based discussions as useful. The students recognized how the assigned readings related to and could help them improve their writing (Bunn, 2013). Each unit reflection, the students named the targeted writing feature as one of the most useful experiences or one that will be helpful in the future (Table 20). The primary way each feature was taught was through text based examples in class. The model used was not always *Outliers*, but each unit there were at least two days of discussion specifically using *Outliers* to model how the targeted writing element was used.

*Table 20. Students' Perception of the Usefulness of Targeted Writing Features*

Element Targeted	# of Mentions on Reflections			Key Quote:
	One	Two	Three	
Ekphrasis and Tropes	13	9	2	"Ekphrasis, I've never really thought about describing in that way, and a deeper and clearer thought process on how to write a story."
Evidence		9	5	"I've learned the master tropes, how to cite, how to properly write and review an essay and I've learned about myself as a writer."
Argument			4	"I learned how to break down two sides of an argument based off of evidence."

Students also learned to connect how the writing elements work together, which reveals they recognize how their previous learning relates to the new ideas. Take ekphrasis and tropes, these features were mentioned 13 times as being skills that would be useful in the next unit, and they were mentioned 9 times on the unit 2 reflection. They were even mentioned on the final unit reflections twice. The key quotes show how students discussed ideas from the previous units as essential to their understanding (Table 20). These quotes show students building on their prior learning as they integrate new ideas. To help students make these connections, the *Outlier* discussion questions likewise scaffolded concepts.

During Unit One I tried to build student comfort level by not calling on students and letting volunteers answer when we moved to whole group discussions. Because the students talked about discussions so positively on their initial surveys, I entered the unit thinking the students would naturally react positively to discussions. My hope was that the students who claimed they enjoyed discussions would volunteer and that the students who expressed reluctance or ambivalence would have the opportunity to feel more comfortable in the environment before they were asked to talk in front of the class. This did not work as well as I hoped.

High-level participants dominated most conversations. Only 3 students mentioned discussions as one of the most useful experiences (Table 21). On the same reflection one student named the students as the least useful experience writing, “If we are going to have discussions in class more people need to want to talk.” And in response to the question regarding discussions shaping their identities, one replied, “I feel like unless you’re in the right group you either get distracted or don’t really talk.”

Table 21. Discussions Mentioned as Useful Experiences

Unit	Times	Key Quotes
One	3	“The group discussions were great for getting advice.” “The group activities really helped me learn.”
Two	6	“The more open feeling/ environment for ideas was enjoyable.” “I liked having to break down the interactions and subtle things while watching the episode of Supernatural.” “In class collaborative discussions of concepts/ ideas” (was most useful).
Three	4	“The use of groups to discuss scenarios of arguments” (was most useful). “Our in class discussions with our groups” (were most useful). “I found the in class participation helped the most.”

In response to the student feedback and the notes in my research journal, during Unit Two I examined how the small group and whole group discussions were working in order to see if I could make the discussions more effective. The students’ reflections along with my research journal reflections indicate that discussions were most successful during Unit Two when I implemented discussion protocols to increase involvement.

The following discussion protocol worked best and generated the highest level of participation:

1. Assign small groups targeted, high level (analysis, evaluate) discussion questions
  - a. Keep the number manageable: 3-5 questions works well.
  - b. Tell the students to take turns writing the answers to ensure shared responsibility.
  - c. Remind groups all group members need to be prepared to respond.
2. Talk to each group as they work. Ask:
  - a. How are you doing?
  - b. What examples have you found?
  - c. How does that example illustrate the trait?
3. Use interactions with small groups to choose a group to start whole group discussion for each question.
  - a. Be sure each group is responsible for at least one question.
  - b. Call on a student by name to respond. Vary the student who responds.
  - c. Ask the other groups to add to the first group's understanding by adding ideas and other examples.

When this discussion protocol became the norm, the whole group discussions became more vibrant and the students genuinely worked together to analyze texts. The students truly became co-creators in knowledge construction. The students learned that their voices matter in my classroom and they have the right and ability

to shape classroom discourse (Boyd & Markarian, 2015). The irony in that revelation is how much the efficacy relied on me as an authority to moderate the discussions. Volunteering did not work to invite in reluctant participants. What worked was actively working with the students during small group discussions. When I knew I planned on calling on someone with anxiety about talking, I would prepare them during small group time by saying, “I like that idea. Would you mind sharing it with the class?” Later on, I also would say during whole group, “Laurel, you share a great idea with your group, would you mind sharing it with everyone?” Another thing that helped increase participation was telling the groups that all group members needed to be prepared to respond. Then, when I went to check in with the groups, I would verify that they all understood and were prepared to share with the whole group. On the Unit Two reflections, even though only 18 students submitted reflections, 6 students said the discussions were the most useful experiences. The students also shared more nuanced feedback. One student even

Table 22. Average Attendance			specifically named what I wanted them to understand about how we were using discussion.
Month	One	Two	
August	Av: 1.5	Av: 1.0	They wrote, “in class collaborative discussion of concepts/ideas” was the most useful activity for learning to write an expository essay.
September	Av: 5.2	Av: 4.6	
October	Av: 7.1	Av: 5.1	
November	Av: 7.85	Av: 8.1	

At the end of Unit Two I perceived the discussions as less effective. My research journal describes my frustration at the frequent absences that affected the lesson. At times, I even changed the day’s lesson because half the students were



absent, and the students who were there sometimes did not have the group’s work. Still, the average monthly attendance reveals that by September approximately 25% of the students missed class each day. By October, while that percentage held steady for Section Two, 33% were missing in Section One. In November, the average dropped for both classes. On average, 8 students were absent each day (Table 22). Eventually, I compensated for this issue by combining groups and modifying the lessons to make sure the students could complete the assigned discussion questions in one day. However, this did not help the students who did not attend, and the students who missed frequently missed key ideas that would help them write their major papers.

Table 23. Discussions Shaping Identity & Writing Practices

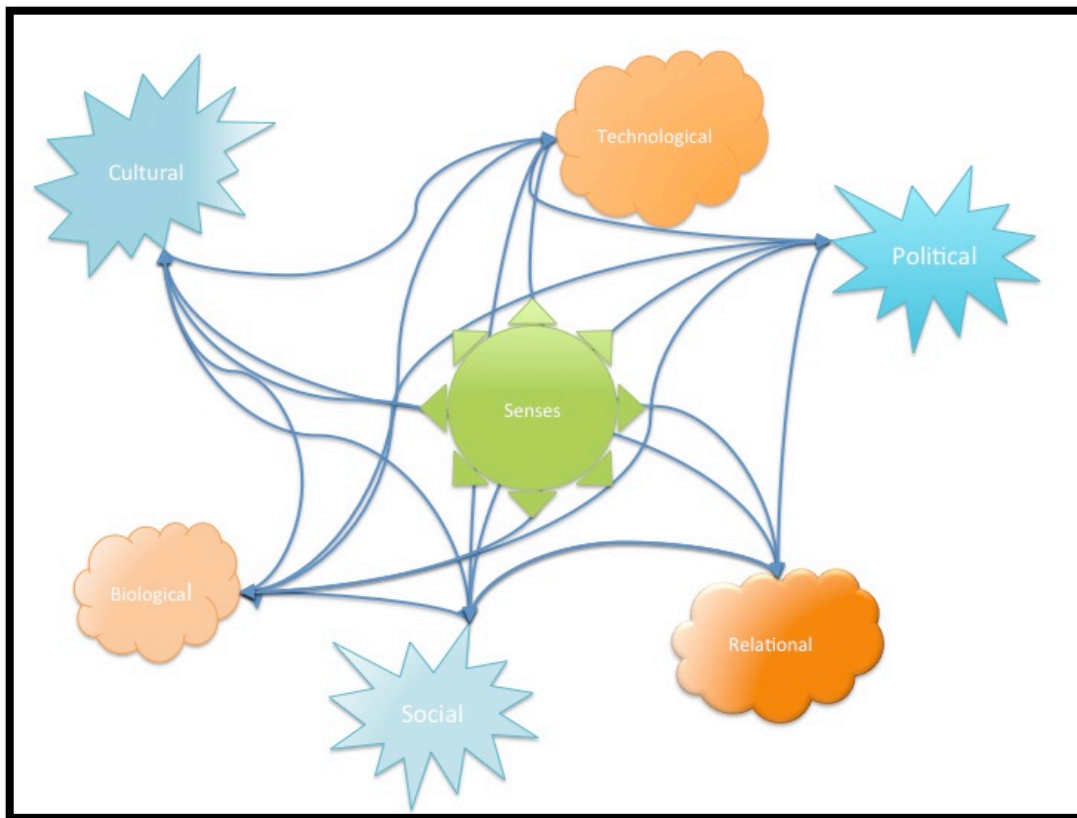
Unit	Writing Practices	Identity
One	“It gives me a different perspective on what a writing a paper could look like.”	“They actually make me think about things I normally wouldn’t.”
Two	“Our discussions are helping me think deeper into my writing. It is a great tool to use to help students practice their writing.”	“They are helping me form my own opinions.”
Three	“The discussions give me confidence in my writing. I feel better about having to write in other classes now from building confidence in comp.”	“Our discussions are helping me to come out of my shell and become more outspoken and confident.”

**Discussions Work to Shape Students’ Identity & Writing Practices.** While the students may not have talked about how the discussions were useful often specifically in the context of text based discussions, the students did perceive the discussions as having an impact on their learning (Table 23). In response to the question regarding how the discussions were shaping their identities as writers and college students, the students frequently discussed how they were learning to

express their opinions and develop confidence. They expressed they are learning “it is okay to talk to other people, and listen to their ideas and point of views.”

This student’s response shows they see and value multiple points-of-view, which is a key aspect of critical thinking (Halx & Reybold, 2015). The students discussed how the class discussions were helping them reflect on their identity and how to become the person they want to be. One student wrote, “The discussions are working to help shape my identity as a college student and a writer because it’s helping me contemplate where I am in life and where and how to get where I want to be.”

The students also discussed how the discussions shaped them as writers. The students discuss how they are improving their “creative thinking” and thinking deeper. In fact, the students believed they were learning the “vital elements” required for success in college (Sullivan, 2015). This student expressed an understanding of the relationship between self-reflection and writing saying, “The more we learn and write, the more I discover about myself and my thoughts and opinions. Now I know how to fully formulate my thoughts so that others understand also.” One student conveyed perfectly the sense of discussions about writing as embodied learning: “All essays and writings come from you, your opinions and who you are, further embedding your personalities and beliefs.” This student recognizes that writing is connected to identity and when you write, you embed beliefs on the body through your work. Writing is both embodied and ideological (Dolmage, 2012). Writing is a process of becoming.



*Figure 14. Assemblage of Embodied Learning*

**Discussion Practices: What Will I Modify in the Future?**

The main way I plan to modify my discussion practices is by incorporating the discussion protocol at the beginning of the course. Although I love Elbow’s idea of not forcing students to share their writing early on, and I still respect the efficacy of varying audience and types of responses, volunteering does not work to build a community of sharing. I went back and revisited my modified map of audience and response in light of my new understanding and decided to build a map of discussion audiences and responses. As I revisited the map, I started with my assemblage of learning and considered how the elements work during

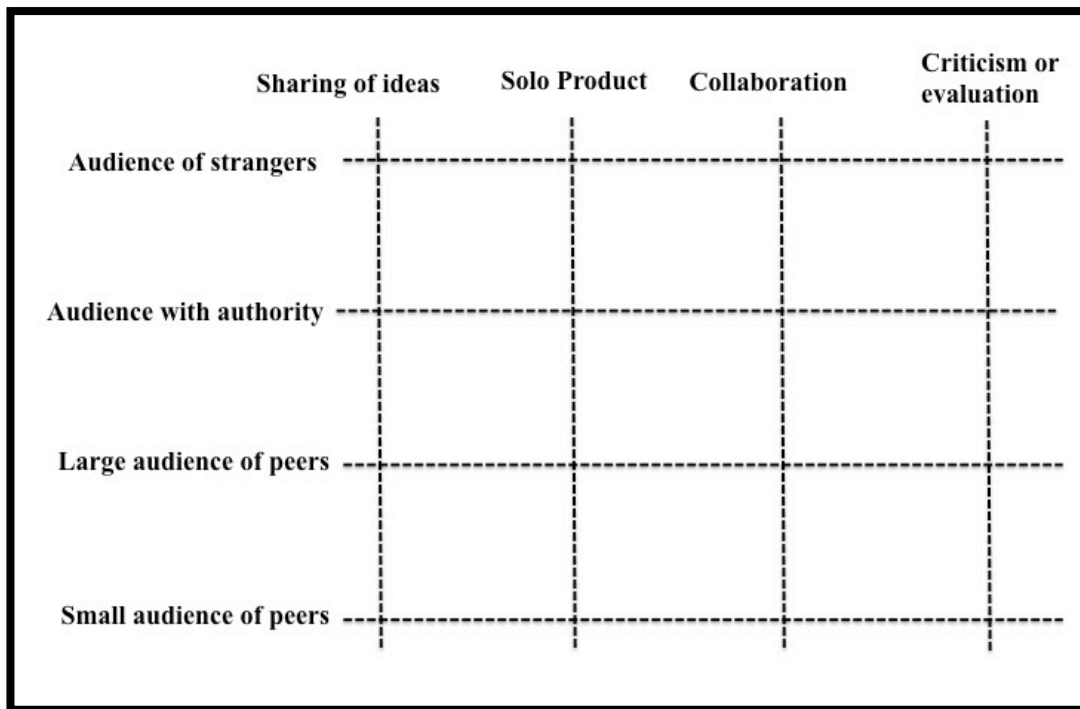
discussion (Figure 14). When the context for learning as an assemblage is discussion, the crucial questions to understanding embodied learning are:

- Political—What power differences exist between the parties?
- Cultural—How does the culture understand how discussion operates?
- Social—Is social learning viewed positively or negatively?
- Relational—What kind of relationships exist between the parties? Are they strangers? Peers? Friends?
- Technological—Is the discussion in person or moderated by technology?
- Biological—Are there any biological issues that might affect the discussion?

Although all these factors influence the discussion's efficacy, there are only a few things a teacher can control when designing classroom discussion. A teacher can design a discussion that is mindful of the political power differences between the parties, the classroom discussion culture, the relationships between the people doing the discussing, and how technology plays a role in the discussion. The students engaging in the discussion will respond to these elements based on how their personal assemblage of learning. Students who have a strongly developed sense of the value of discussion and enjoy social learning will more naturally engage in class discussion. To make discussions effective for all learners, I need to structure discussions with consideration for those who do not enjoy social learning. Amy actually wrote an argumentative paper about introverts and socialization that works to support my ideas for modifying my practices. In her paper she argued that to encourage introverts to socialize in class, you have to understand them. She argues,

When doing group projects don't make the groups too large, only 3 or 5 people at max. Make sure to inform the class of the project and that they will only need a few partner ahead of time. Don't spring it on them or they will shut down. Let them relax, try to make sure there is not stress involved and let others carry the conversation. Don't get mad if they're not participating right away. Be patient, give the time to get to know their group and to get comfortable.

With these ideas in mind, I constructed a map to invite reluctant students into discussion (Figure 15). Like Elbow, I constructed the map to reflect degree of risk from lowest to highest risk (Elbow, 2000). The audiences are shown most risky at the top to least risky. For students who do not enjoy discussion, the highest degree of risk is an audience of strangers. For example, engaging in a discussion in a public forum such as a town hall. The next most risky audience is an audience with authority over you. When you reduce the power difference, the audience becomes less risky. At that point, the size of the group influences how willing students may be to participate. My research has shown, students are much more willing to engage in small group discussion with their peers.



*Figure 15. Map of Discussion Audience and Response*

Types of responses can also influence how willing students are to engage.

The types of responses are shown from left, as least challenging, to most challenging on the right. Simply sharing ideas without having to produce a product is the least challenging type of response. Next, the students can produce their own products in response to a group discussion. Finally, a group product is more challenging. When students have to work together to produce a product, there is potential for inequity in workload. I noticed that when the students worked together to produce a response, the strong students dominated and did the majority of the work. Students had to be given specific instructions in order to balance the work. It worked well to have the students share the discussion and then take turns producing their own response.

With these ideas in mind, in addition to incorporating my discussion protocol earlier, I am going to incorporate activities that involve discussion with no

product. I will design activities where the students only need to share ideas regularly into the class early on to help build relationships between the students. By doing so, I hope to create more opportunities for students' inner brilliance to flourish (Elbow, 2001). At the beginning of a course, many of the students are strangers; therefore, all discussion is high risk for those reluctant to share. My hope is that the combination of discussions to build relationships and a structured discussion protocol will create more productive discussions early on. Creating opportunities for the students to turn the strangers into peers will hopefully build stronger relationships and transform reluctant students into effective participants. As another student expressed, "The discussions are making me have to talk to my classmates, which gets me closer to them as friends." If all the students view their classmates as friends, they will be more likely to engage in discussion. This is a noteworthy goal because good writing can begin with engaged, thoughtful conversation with friends (Emerson, 2009). In addition, if the students engage in more discussion, they will build confidence in their literacy skills that will create a stronger sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

### **Blogs: What Worked Well**

Student blogging was definitely the least successful practice. Only 9 students met or exceeded the standard for writing blogging. This is the area where the greatest discrepancy between the students can be seen. Students either actively engaged and wrote good blogs, or barely participated. Despite this, the blogs still show more promise for engaging students than student discussion boards. The blogs were multimodal and included pictures, videos, and links. The conversations

the students had were deeper and more interesting. For the students who did engage in blog discussions, the online forum did “promote interaction and complex thinking that I not always effective in traditional face-to-face learning situations” (Loncar, Bennet, & Liu, 2014, p. 94). The students who did engage in blogging talked to people they did not normally talk to in class and discussed a variety of issues related to student success. I thought that having students moderate the discussions worked to cultivate the sense of belonging (Smith, 2008). The students could be excellent moderators.

### **What Will I Modify in the Future?**

The only problem was the lack of engagement from half the students. To improve engagement in the future, I am going to let the students write blogs about any topic from the beginning of the course. I am hoping this will empower all students to invest in blogging. Reed (2011) says that freedom of expression and form encourages students to write more and develop their skills as writers. When I opened up the topic, blogging participation did briefly increase again. But like the discussion practices, participation dropped off after fall break. To deal with that issue, I am going to require students to schedule all the blogs prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> week of class. I am hoping that more students will keep the motivation to participate if they are expected to participate before attendance dips dramatically in November.

### **Student Writing Practices: What Worked Well**

In terms of scaffolding, the course structure worked well to increase student learning. The unit reflections reveal that students also saw how the assignments with their targeted skills worked together. Each unit I asked the students how the



ideas in the current unit will help them during the next unit. The dual goals in having the students begin by writing the personal creed were to teach the value of rich description and engage in self-reflection. As one student said, “Writing the code allowed me to really learn about myself.” After engaging in reflection and self-discovery, I wanted the students to use evidence to explore the communities they would like to join. One student described the skills in the first unit as providing a natural link. They wrote, “The personal creed is a practice writing to find yourself, and for your own opinions. Research papers are your opinions supported by research evidence.” Develop your opinions and ideas first, then learn how to use evidence to support your ideas. The final unit aimed to teach them how to use their opinions and research skills to effectively argue a position. One student described how the skills from the personal creed and expository unit will work together to help them construct an effective argument. This student proclaimed, “In this unit, I will have to be relying on the logos of other people. Therefore, I will need to use my previous knowledge of citation methods to incorporate their professional statements. In addition, by using ekphrasis and/or tropes, I will be able to communicate my message vividly and effectively.” This statement beautifully describes how they saw the units as building upon each other. It also reveals an understanding of writing processes, content knowledge, and task knowledge that Yancey (1998) believes is required for good self-assessment. This student has the critical thinking skills required to reflect on their learning and grow from it.

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Table 24. Peer Review Mentioned as Most Useful Experience

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Times	Key Quotes
1	“Our peer review activity helped a lot for me.”
3	“I found the peer workshop activities most useful for learning to write expository essays.”
8	“The peer review was helpful because they helped me merge different povs.” “I found the peer revision day the most useful because someone else was able to read the paper and argue against it.”

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Besides the aforementioned discussions of the elements and writing and style, the primary way dialectical methods were used to teach writing was through peer review. By the end of the course, many students saw peer review as a useful tool for improving their writing. On the final course reflection, 8 students mentioned peer review as one of the most useful experiences. My students’ opinions correlate with previous studies that found students benefit from hearing from a variety of points-of-views and were able to use what they learned to improve their writing (Loretto, DeMartino, & Godley, 2016). This growing recognition of how peer review works to improve writing confirms Simmons (2003) finding that effective peer review has to be taught and reinforced over time. Recently on the NCTE Teaching and Learning Forum, I read a discussion that helped clarify my understanding of why peer review worked in my class. Susan Knoppow who works at Wow Writing Workshop said, “When the focus of a writing workshop or peer editing session is ‘fixing’ broken things, very little real learning occurs. When, instead, the focus is on noticing and responding, students learn to read their own work more effectively as well” (Knoppow). One reason my students found the peer review activities effective was the activities did not focus on error correction.

Through peer review activities in tandem with teacher feedback and the opportunity to revise to improve their grade using the final portfolio. Student essays improved. Table 14 shows that by the end of the semester, only 3 personal creed essays were still below the standard and 4 expository essays. This means that through revision, the majority of the participants produced work that met or exceeded the standard. This finding was exciting. Student writing practices improved through the use of dialectical writing strategies. Becky reflects on revising her personal creed and states that through revising, “I was able to filter out the bad things and add more to help express my feelings.” She adds, “I never wrote much before this and I got to expand as a writer and really find myself. I feel like my final essay really expressed myself and my values.” Cathy beautifully expressed how peer review transformed her writing. In her writing reflection she discussed how she hated reading her work out loud because “I get this annoying little mocking voice in my head that just likes to tell me how stupid I sound.” She said that this voice made her self-conscious and awkward in peer review. By the end of the class, “the tiny voice just disappeared and I got over my fear. I saw just [how] much it truly helps to have some else read your papers.”

### **Writing Practices: What Will I Modify in the Future?**

The main way I plan on modifying writing instruction in the future is by changing the timing of the assignments. Table 15 shows how student attendance dramatically decreases throughout the semester. Students who miss class, miss vital instruction, and this tends to hurt their work. The impact these absences had can be seen in the final portfolios. 3 students did not submit their final essay and 7 did not

submit final reflection issues. Not submitting these required elements hurt their grade. Furthermore, I allotted too much time for the first essay. We spent six weeks on the personal creed, thus the final two units both took place when absences began to accumulate. This means I was introducing vital skills like research, citation, and constructing claims when the students were frequently missing class.

When I was discussing this concern during validation, a colleague mentioned attending a webinar, “Beyond Retention: Early Identification and Intervention with First-Year Students.” In the webinar she learned that you can improve students’ success in a course by targeting students who are at risk of failure by the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the semester. As a result, she changed her course schedule so that the first essay was due at the end of the first week, and that all her essays were due by week 12 leaving substantial time for revision. Students who did not turn in the first essay were turned into our student retention specialist. All the students contacted my colleague, submitted their essays, and as a result her students all passed the class. She told me the students hated writing the first essay that quickly, but she felt the pace increased student success. I plan on modifying my course structure accordingly. Like my colleague, I reported students who were not successful to the academic success center. This did help a couple students who did not turn in their early essays. However, it was the 7<sup>th</sup> week of the semester when that happened. I was not able to intervene with the students who failed to submit their final essays or writing reflections because these were due with their final portfolio. Besides improving student retention, altering the course schedule will ensure more students are in class when we are covering new information.

Hopefully, I can introduce all the vital skills before attendance begins to decrease. The students will also benefit from the ability to spend the final weeks in class revising their work and writing better reflections.

### **Student Reflection Practices: What Worked Well**

Throughout the course I cultivated self-assessment through unit reflections (Yancey, 1998). The unit reflections showed me that students were able to reflect on their learning in meaningful ways. The students talked about how they built confidence in their abilities to talk in class and improve as writers. The students discussed ways they were able to integrate skills from the prior units into the current learning. They talked about improved critical and creative thinking. They also discussed how throughout the course they learned more about themselves. One said the class worked to help “me contemplate where I am in life and where and how to get where I want to be.” They learned to reflect on their identities and develop the self-efficacy required to succeed in their new endeavors. In fact, I was surprised by how thoughtfully and honestly the students reflected on their experiences in class. It was reassuring to read the students believed they were building the academic skills and self-confidence that increase their chances to succeed in college (Kelly, J.T., Kendrick, M.M., Newgent, R.A., & Lucas, C.J., 2007).

Many students talked about how they have improved as writers. Cathy said that prior to taking freshman composition, her papers were “monotone” and “extremely formal.” She said, “I barely ever used metaphors or similes in my old papers but now I love them like a fat kid loves cake.” It is particularly telling that

she used a simile to express her increased understanding. She consciously integrated her former weakness into her discussion of how she improved. Laurel discussed how her writing improved overall. She said her prior classes taught the same things every year, and she did not grow, but this year, “I felt a magnificent change in my skills. I have definitely grown as a writer and feel so much better about my writing.” Both these statements reflect a new, stronger literate identity that they will carry with them throughout their college experiences (Beach, et al., 2013).

The personal creed was a powerful tool for building students reflective abilities. By the end of the semester, nearly all the students wrote thoughtful, richly detailed creeds. The student final writing reflections reveal some ways the creeds made an impact on their learning. In their final reflections, several students mentioned the benefit of reflecting on their experiences. Amy wrote,

addressing my depressions has helped me more than I thought possible, I have found that those depressing thoughts have seemed to lessen even more so when I’m writing or talking about them. I was so happy that I was able to speak about my inner feelings in a paper. I have come face to face with my darkness and I think I’m becoming ready to fully let go.

Amy was able to work through traumatic issues that have haunted her, through writing and reflection she is able to move on. Felicity says, “the ink of my inner depths spills across the pages in the form of a breathtaking masterpiece, and I look at it realizing that maybe there is something beautiful inside of me after all. It just likes to hide in the dark.” Felicity remarked that dealing with her anorexia, anxiety, and depression helped her see her inner beauty. These young ladies were able to

use their past to reflect on their values and beliefs and build a sense of self that will help them become the person they want to be in the future (Creger, 2004).

### **Student Reflection Practices: What Will I Modify in the Future?**

Overall, I feel confident in the student reflection practices. The personal creed, unit reflections, and writing reflection worked well to help students actively critical think and reflect on their learning. The only modification I would make is to include an author's note on the final drafts of each paper. It can be challenging to remember everything you learned and gained during a course when your primary reflective paper is at the end of the class when you are exhausted from your first semester of college and finals. If the students write an author's note for each paper, they can use these notes to guide their final reflections

### **How the Course Worked to Build Relationships with Students**

When I designed the course I remained mindful that most my freshman composition students entered my classroom separated from high school only by summer vacation (Tremmel, 2001). I kept in mind that their relationships with writing had been shaped the culture of standardization endemic in K-12 education that serves to squash teacher efforts to demonstrate that writing matters beyond testing (Fanetti, Bushrow, & DeWeese, 2010). My goal was to build a strong relationship that would help me transform Big Macs into lifelong learners. Relationships needed to be the foundation of the curriculum in order for me to show the students that I care so that the students would invest in the class and become the thinkers I knew they were capable of being (Aguilar, Fun, Jago, 2007). This consideration of how I relate to students had to happen prior to any attempts to

“destabilize” student realities and identities if I expected any positive results. I had to find a way to discover who the students were as people and literacy learners in order to reshape my practices according to my values.

The primary ways I learned about my students were the initial course survey, the literacy narrative, and the personal creed journals. Initial course surveys were the traditional way I collected information about my students as learners. Through the surveys, I learned information that helped me understand how students view writing and discussion practices. The most surprising thing I learned from adding the literacy narrative and personal creed was the impact traumatic events had on many students’ lives.

#### **Literacy Narrative: How Students View Literacy**

I assigned the literacy narrative hoping it would help the students reflect on their past experiences and consider how the experiences shape how they relate to literacy. My students did not write simplistic narrative success stories (Alexander, D.; Hall & Minnix; Newkirk). Their narratives explored how community, events, or people shaped their literacy experiences. The narratives examined the “intricate webs” that shaped their literacy lives and revealed how the selected experience impacted their literacy lives (Mapes, 2016, p. 689). When I assigned the narrative, I expected students would discuss how a person, class, or text impacted how they view literacy. I hoped that this would give me insight into who had negative associations with literacy and potentially how I could help them build more positive associations. Instead, I discovered that many students perceived traumatic events as having the biggest impact on their literacy lives. In fact, 12 participants



discussed how a traumatic event was important to their literacy lives. 6 students discussed how personal mental health issues such as anxiety and depression impacted their literacy lives. 6 discussed serious family issues such as alcoholism, abuse, and death impacted them (Appendix G). Surprised by this finding, I researched the impact trauma could have on my students' success.

This finding is significant because personal issues, both physical and mental, places students at higher risk for attrition. 58.5% of students who leave college before graduation do so because of personal reasons. Personal physical and mental health along with family issues were the most frequently named reasons for students' decision to withdraw. (Kelly, J.T., Kendrick, M.M., Newgent, R.A., & Lucas, C.J, 2007). Mental health issues are common for students in higher education and students with these issues often face academic challenges including dropping out (Conley, S. C., Durlak, J. A., Kirsch, A. C., 2015). People with high self-efficacy are more likely to persist when they face challenges (Bandura, 1977; Pajares, 1996). Increasing student academic confidence can help them succeed when they face adversity (Kelly, J.T., Kendrick, M.M., Newgent, R.A., & Lucas, C.J, 2007).

My primary goal in conducting the study was to become the teacher my students need in order to engage them through dialectical teaching. I was shocked to learn that so many of my students entered my class with risk factors. There is one powerful way trauma affected the way I built relationships that does not fit well within the consideration of the research questions. Laurel, Shea, Leia, and Nick experienced anxiety, depression, and health issues during the semester that

affected their attendance and caused them to fall behind in class. Because I understood their issues, I responded with empathy. I helped each of them develop a plan to pass the class that was in keeping with what they felt capable of accomplishing. Laurel managed to rise to the occasion and received an A through her extraordinary revision efforts and hard work. The others all received Cs, but I believe they would have failed if I had not reached out and let them know I was there to help.

### **Relationship Building: What Will I Modify in the Future?**

Dutro (2011) discusses how trauma writing could build the necessary relations that “facilitate engagement and intellectual risk-taking for students and teachers” (p. 194). In the article she talks about a quote from bell hooks that speaks to why my surprising finding resonated with me. hooks (1994) asserts that “to teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin” (p. 14). Effective dialectic instruction is deep and intimate. To engage students through the dialectic, I need to care for their souls.

Dutro argues that too often teachers serve as witnesses to student trauma but do not testify to their own experiences. She argues,

this sharing of students’ wounds requires us to awaken to the ways our stories are connected to those we witness. At the same time, those connections must be allowed to reveal the potentially different ways that we and students are positioned by our challenges. Our testimony, then, functions as a conscious, risky move to share the vulnerability that is inherent in classrooms, while remaining aware of how privilege and power shape the stakes of those exposures. (p. 199).

Wounded writing can be critical because students can come to know themselves through being testimony to their experiences. Sharing your own testimony as a teacher can help transform your role from simply teacher to that of a person, who struggles like they struggle, with personal issues. Dutro says, “we need to let our hearts break in the face of some of the stories our students bring to us and let their hearts bleed a bit for us” (p. 209). Dialectic instruction is about reciprocity—the give and receiving equally in learning. Perhaps, like Dutro contends, I need to bear testimony to my own wounds in return.

The choice to bear testimony feels risky. I am well aware of “how privilege and power shape the stakes” of the revelation. I’m conditioned by my years in public education to stand as a positive role model and further conditioned by my own cultural background as a woman in the LDS church to project an image of perfection. When I wrote my blog and disclosed my experience with bullying, I felt vulnerable. When I disclosed through blog discussion that I got a tattoo as part of the healing process, like the two young ladies, I nearly panicked. It was extremely hard to share even a hint of how trauma had shaped me. I wanted them to feel “heard and understood” (Elbow, 2000, p. 31). But, I did not want to open up. I simply told the students that I shared their experience, but I did not share my own story.

The next week for my literacy blog, I modeled literacy narratives by responding to David Sedaris’ essay about his experiences learning French as an adult, “Me Talk Pretty,” which we discussed in class. In my essay, I discussed how my relationship with my French teacher was destroyed when I cheated on a test and

then confessed to her. That week students shared their own stories of educational injustice. Until I reflected on these exchanges it never dawned on me that I might have been inadvertently inviting the students to disclose their own painful experiences. My feeble attempts at bearing testimony might have been enough to cause some to open up. In reflecting on how I will use this experience to modify my future practices, I am drawn to a passage in Cathy's writing reflection. In reflecting on her personal creed she said, "I feel like it being my first essay I was very closed off in revealing my personal life in my essays." If I want the students to disclose their stories to build the relationships needed to teach effectively, I'm going to have to be willing to testify.

#### **Final Thoughts: To What Extent Did I Live My Values Through Practice**

Conducting this action research study was the most challenging and rewarding experience of my life. I had no idea how time consuming it would be to consider all the dialogic practices in a course. That being said, the hard work was worth it. Critical reflection on my practices and how those practices affect students has helped me grow as a teacher, and I feel confident I will be able to use what I learned to help all my students grow as writers and critical thinkers. One value I fully lived through my study was the importance of relationships to student success. I learned understanding my students as learners is necessary. I will be able to alter my practices better in the future because I carefully explored my practices. Now, I truly believe I can be the teacher my students need by building strong relationships and using those relationships to show students they are brilliant. Prior to this study, I believed that students enter the classroom an assemblage of their past experiences,

and that to help them form lines of flight, I need to understand their lines of articulation and how these lines interact with my own. I knew some of my students had experienced challenges that could impact their learning, but I never realized how many were entering my classroom with traumatic experiences embedded on their bodies.

Before I conducted this study, I always held some skepticism regarding the value of personal writing in freshman composition. I believed I needed to use the limited time I have to teach the students to use academic discourses. I didn't consider how important reflecting on the self could be for young people entering a new academic adventure. Students gain confidence in their abilities by considering who they are, what they believe, and what they want to learn. This confidence can lead to improved self-efficacy, and hopefully, help them succeed in their future endeavors. I was also surprised by how much student writing improved through discussing ekphrasis and tropes and through incorporating them in their writing. Again, I considered these elements more important in creative papers, but my students' voices and descriptions came alive. This was the first time I had a class dive deep into the creative side, and it transformed their writing more than I thought possible. I have seldom been as proud as when Cathy said she learned to love similes "like a fat kid loves cake." That shows a true, and hilarious, understanding.

Through reflecting on discussion practices, I realized that even in college classes, I have to be the mediator of interactions and experiences in order for them to be successful. I had a naïve idea that college students would be more actively

engaged than high schools students; however, effective discussion takes careful planning and consistent effort. I was proud of the way I aligned our discussion practices with our writing goals. I felt that worked extremely well. But, I wish I had used a discussion protocol from the beginning. To build a culture of discussion, you have to invite in the reluctant participants. Moving between small group and whole group discussions and ensuring the weaker voices feel supported and ready to participate is key. I also discovered how attendance can make an extraordinary impact. The days when attendance began to drop off, I doubted myself and the efficacy of my practices. Those were not good days. However, because I reflected on the experiences in my research journal, I learned to recognize what was happening and compensate. However, I have not yet discovered a practice to improve attendance. From my colleagues feedback, I know that the attendance patterns I experienced are typical. I plan on using that knowledge to proactively design my class so the hard thinking and learning will occur before attendance begins to lag. I am hopeful this will improve student achievement on their final essays and give them more time to devote to revision and reflection.

Overall, I do believe my students grew as writers and critical thinkers through dialectical practices. The students learned to consider new perspectives, form their own opinions, and support their opinions with evidence. At least some of the students with weak identities as writers began to see themselves as capable of writing great things. Several students claimed on their writing reflections that they grew more as a writer in that one semester than in all of high school. Even Luke, who kept missing class, thanked me for helping him grow as a writer. Students

learned that dialectical writing practices, like peer review, are powerful tools for improving writing. They demonstrated this learning through the growth in their writing over the semester. Through discussion, the students learned to “come out of their shells” and develop their “inner voice.”

Nothing makes a teacher feel better about all the time and effort invested in a class than a student expressing what they hoped they would learn. Emily said, “at the beginning of the semester I was actually afraid.” She goes on to describe how she was afraid she wasn’t capable of handling college level writing assignments. She concludes, “I never really liked to write in high school, I always dreaded it when our teachers gave us an essay to write. Here in college after finally getting over my fears, I have discovered I like to write.”

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Personal Creed Assignment

#### *Personal Creed Statement*

**Overview:** A personal creed is a statement describing what you value and how these values reflect your identity as a person. Over the last few weeks, you have explored circumstances, people, events, and values that have shaped you throughout your life. These reflective activities allow you to see patterns in your life. To create your personal creed statement, you will look back at your personal creed journals and reflect and then use that reflection along with your informal writings to write your creed.

For this assignment, you will write a 3-4 page reflective paper containing your personal creed statement, specific examples from your life that illustrate why your creed matters, a goal for the future, and an analysis of how this statement of who you are and what you believe will contribute to your success as a college student.

#### Writing Goals:

For this assignment, you will write an essay that explores the important aspects of your life in narrative form. Remember, effective personal writing is focused on illustrating specific events, topics, and themes. The significance of the chosen examples is shown by carefully “showing” the story to the reader through your words.

#### *Effective personal creed papers will contain:*

- A clear, concise creed statement that is clearly grounded in the chosen examples
- Detailed, focused narrative that illustrates key aspects in your life
  - Specific details in storied form including dialogue where appropriate
- A clear and logical arrangement that works to develop your story
- A goal for the future that aligns with your creed and vision of success
- An analysis of how your creed and your goal will help you be successful throughout college
- A quote or saying that reflects your personal creed.

#### Requirements:

- 750-1000 words, double-spaced (approximately 3-4 pages)
- Prewriting should be completed **Wednesday, September 21**
  - You do not need to submit your prewriting. It is a guide for you.
- Personal Creed Rough Draft due in class **Monday, September 26**
  - This does not need to be a full draft, but you should have one or two pages. Bring your draft to class, and select a section you are willing to share with your classmates. We will share our selected sections and provide feedback in class. (You may want to type the chosen section on a separate piece of paper.)
  - You will also have time to write in class, so make sure you have access to your draft!
- Peer Revision Workshop due in class and on Blackboard **Wednesday, September 28**
  - Because this is personal writing, you do not need to share your full draft in class. Instead, bring another section you feel comfortable sharing for feedback.
- Final Draft due on Blackboard Final Draft due on Blackboard **Monday, October 3 @ 11:59 p.m.**
  - Please bring a printed out copy of your final essay & rough draft to class on Monday, October 3.

*This project has been adapted from a project by John Creger that was recognized by the James Moffett Memorial Award for Teacher Research, National Council of Teachers of English and the National Writing Project*

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## Personal Creed Project Rubric

<b>Focus and Ideas</b>	<b>Style</b>	<b>Arrangement</b>	<b>Revision</b>
<p>A clear, concise creed statement that is clearly grounded in the chosen examples—which are clearly explained. Detailed, focused narrative that illustrates key aspects in your life and develops significance. Other kinds of evidence are provided as appropriate.</p> <p>A goal for the future that aligns with your creed and vision of success. An analysis of how your creed and your goal will help you be successful throughout college</p> <p>A quote or saying that reflects your personal creed.</p>	<p>Ekphrasis draws the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate. The reader can “see” the events and through this showing, understand why the events matter to the creed</p> <p>A master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is effectively used creatively where appropriate. More than one may be used.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation are used appropriately. Stylistic deviations make sense. Few errors, none impede understanding. The ideas flow, transitions improve understanding.</p>	<p>The paper’s arrangement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clear and logical, it works to improve the understanding of the ideas</li> <li>chronological (events are clearly depicted in the order in which they occur—or if another arrangement is used, it is logically conveyed)</li> </ul> <p>Exceeds the format requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1000 words or more, double-spaced (approximately 4-5 pages)</li> <li>12 point, easy to read font such as Times.</li> </ul>	<p>The final draft shows significant revision. It is clear that time and effort were dedicated to improving the paper.</p> <p>Revisions work to add details, enrich the reader’s understanding, improve the use of ekphrasis, add or refine a trope.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas. The editing helps the ideas “sing.”</p>
<p>A clear creed statement that is grounded in the chosen examples. A focused narrative that illustrates aspects in your life and tries to develop significance</p> <p>A goal for the future that somewhat aligns with your creed and vision of success. Attempts to analyze how your creed and your goal will help you be successful throughout college</p> <p>A quote or saying, may not reflect creed.</p>	<p>Ekphrasis tries to draw the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate.</p> <p>A master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is used where appropriate.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation are used appropriately. Stylistic deviations make sense. Minor errors, may somewhat impede understanding.</p>	<p>The paper’s arrangement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mostly clear and logical</li> <li>chronological (events are depicted in the order in which they occur—or if another arrangement is used, it is most logically conveyed)</li> <li>mostly works to develop your story.</li> </ul> <p>Meets the format requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>750-1000 words, double-spaced (approximately 3-4 pages)</li> <li>12 point, easy to read font such as Times.</li> </ul>	<p>The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper.</p> <p>Revision add minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.</p>
<p>A creed statement is given, but may not strongly relate the chosen examples. The narrative discusses aspects in your life but significance may be lacking.</p> <p>A goal for the future is missing or does not align with your creed and vision of success. Fails to analyze how your creed and/or your goal will help you be successful throughout college</p> <p>A quote or saying is lacking.</p>	<p>Ekphrasis is lacking. Events are not described using rich details. Examples may not be given or are not appropriate.</p> <p>A master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is not used or is not used appropriately.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation errors impede understanding.</p>	<p>The paper’s arrangement is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lacks clarity or logic</li> <li>the order is not chronological (events are depicted in the order in which they occur—or does not make sense.</li> <li>does not work to develop your story.</li> </ul> <p><b>Does Not Meets the format requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Papers that do not meet the minimum requirements will not be graded.</b></li> <li><b>Revise and Resubmit.</b></li> </ul>	<p>The final draft shows little revision. It is clear that little time and was made to improve the paper.</p> <p>Revision are minor and do little to add to the story.</p> <p>Editing is lacking, and errors are still evident.</p> <p><b>Note: late papers lose the revision points and potential to revise to improve your grade. If only one draft is submitted, you will lose all the revision points as well.</b></p>
_____/40	_____/30	_____/30	_____/50
<p><b>Project Total:</b> _____ / 150</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>			

## Personal Creed #3

# Qualities or Traits that Shape Me

- a list and 2-3 paragraphs

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” Today, I’d like you to examine ‘what lies within’ you in order to better understand how your own qualities contribute to your successes.

### 1) List

Create a list of **your own qualities** that may have helped you become the person you are today and might help you--or might make it difficult for you to--become the person you wish to be. Be sure to acknowledge your GOOD QUALITIES. If you’re not sure what they might be, ask others who know you. Also, be brave and include **at least two** of your LESS-THAN-PERFECT QUALITIES. Everybody has them, and must face them at some point! Note: some qualities can be both positive and not-so-positive.

#### Some Ideas for Positive Qualities:

- Abilities I have shown
- Gifts or talents I have shown
- Strengths I possess
- My capacity to forgive
- My generosity
- What gives me energy
- My courage or creativity
- My compassion or determination
- Qualities others have encouraged in me
- Qualities others have discouraged in me
- My ability to lead or guide others

#### Some Ideas for Less-than-Perfect Qualities:

- Limitations I must accept
- Fears I must deal with
- Selfishness I sometimes show
- Tendency to dominate or bully others
- Tendency to allow others to dominate me
- Indecisiveness that sometimes plagues me
- My failure to believe in myself
- My unwillingness to forgive others
- My lack of confidence
- My lack of ambition
- My confusion about who I really am

### 2) Circle

After you write your list, circle your three to five most significant qualities.

### 3) Reflect

Write a paragraph about each of the qualities or traits you circled. Describe a situation when this quality came out in you. Explain how this quality is significant in your life. Explain how this quality has contributed to your successes (and/or failures).

#### Possible Sentence Starters:

- A time I demonstrated the quality of \_\_\_\_\_ was when...
- This event showed the quality of \_\_\_\_\_ because...
- The quality of \_\_\_\_\_ has been significant in my life because...
- If I showed the quality of \_\_\_\_\_ more/less regularly, my life would...
- If I stopped/started showing the quality of \_\_\_\_\_, my life would...
- The quality of \_\_\_\_\_ has affected my life and the life of others around me by...

*This project has been adapted by a project by John Greger that was recognized by the James Moffett Memorial Award for Teacher Research, National Council of Teachers of English and the National Writing Project*

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## Appendix B: Discourse Community Assignment

### *Expository Unit Paper: Communities of Success*

#### **Project Overview:**

In *Outliers*, Gladwell explores the ways in which a person's environment, including community, shapes that person's success. We all embody many roles and many identities, some we claim ourselves and some imposed on us by others. The communities we belong to affect our personal experiences and also send messages to others about who we are. Here is your opportunity to assert some control over that message. Choose a community with which you identify (or would like to join in the future)—this can be a formal organization, like the Elks Lodge, or an informal group, like banjo players. You will research the community and write an essay describing what it means to be a member of that community. Through your paper, you will demonstrate your ability to communicate according to the conventions and expectations of your audience(s).

- **Stance:** This essay asks you to take a stance and support it with evidence, which might include examples from your own experience, observations of others, or current events, among other possibilities. Your stance must be clear to the reader, and you must connect the evidence you present to the claims you make.
- **Rhetorical Situation:** As always, your audience is your instructor and classmates, but you may choose to direct your essay to an ideal reader (while keeping your REAL readers in mind). Who is the best audience for this essay? Is it most effective to address outsiders who might hold certain stereotypes, assumptions, or misconceptions about the identity you are describing? Or is it important to address insiders in the hopes of solidifying or even redefining group identity? Consider the broad context within which you are writing, including social, political, and historical realities or perceptions that shape how people see your topic.

#### **Writing Goals:**

To accomplish this purpose, your paper must:

- Contain a concisely stated thesis that clearly establishes your claim about the community
- Be arranged according to a recognizable and cohesive structure focused on your thesis or inquiry
- Synthesize primary and secondary research in the form of observations, interviews, unit readings, etc. to construct claims that support your thesis. (Minimum of three sources: one primary & two secondary.)
- Through correct MLA citations of all sources, demonstrate use sufficient textual evidence (quotes and paraphrases) to support your claims.

#### **Getting Ready to Write: Possible Questions to Consider\***

- What elements make this group a discourse community? How do you know?
- Why did this discourse community form?
- What is your role in this discourse community? How do you see your own identity as a member?
- How do members use texts to communicate? What are the primary methods of communication?
- What unique language features does the community possess? How do these features work within the community?
- What does a successful member of this discourse community look like? What skills does this successful person possess? How do new members join your discourse community?
- How might factors such as gender, class, or race affect someone's effort to join your discourse communities?
- How is authority negotiated within discourse communities? How do people establish, claim, or demonstrate authority?

\*You may choose to address any combination of these questions, or instead write on another topic dealing with a discourse community of your choosing. Consider this list to be a starting point rather than a directive.

#### **Requirements:**

- 750-1250 words, double-spaced (approximately 3-5 pages)
- Cite all sources (quotes AND paraphrases) in MLA format
- MLA-style formatting for headings, margins, line spacing, and page numbers
- 12-point Times New Roman font

#### **Major Due Dates:**

- Full draft due in class for writing workshop and peer review **Monday, October 31**
- Full Revision due in class and on Blackboard **Monday, November 8th**

## Expository Essay Rubric

<i><b>Invention</b></i>	<i><b>Style</b></i>	<i><b>Arrangement</b></i>	<i><b>Revision</b></i>
<p>Focuses on a single, strong main idea—this should be a specific community that is clearly contextualized for the reader—you understand the writer in relation to the community.</p> <p>Provides sufficient and well chosen background and setting needed to understand the analysis</p> <p>Integrates a strong thesis based on the discourse community being explored</p> <p>Well develops the ideas through expository elements: definitions, examples, narration, description, classify, etc.</p> <p>Incorporates original and/or personal, unique perspectives and interpretations—The exceeds paper provides a unique view that is strongly connected to the writer.</p>	<p>Ekphrasis draws the reader into the essay by bringing examples to life for the reader. A master trope is effectively used creatively where appropriate. More than one may be used.</p> <p>Thoroughly addresses and analyzes the chosen aspects; effectively integrates both primary and secondary sources—embedded using attributive tags where appropriate; detailed explanations situate the topic before analyzing how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a sophisticated way that is based in the explanation and analysis.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation are used appropriately. Stylistic deviations make sense. Few errors, none impede understanding. The ideas flow, transitions improve understanding.</p>	<p><b>The paper's arrangement is:</b> Clear and logical, it works well to improve the understanding of the ideas. Flows smoothly through the stages: explain, analyze, interpret. Good mix of quoted and paraphrased sources</p> <p>Voice is lively and unique, but still works well to support the ideas and strengths the flow.</p> <p><b>Exceeds the format requirements:</b> 1250 words or more, double-spaced (approximately 5-6 pages); 12 point, easy to read font such as Times.</p> <p>MLA Heading, Works Cited, and all sources are parenthetical cited (both quotes and paraphrases)</p> <p>At least 3 sources: 1 primary, 1 secondary, and the third may be either primary or secondary.</p>	<p>The final draft shows significant revision. It is clear that time and effort were dedicated to improving the paper.</p> <p>Revisions work to add details, enrich the reader's understanding, analysis of the topic, improve the use of ekphrasis, add or refine a trope, or deepen the interpretation.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas. The editing helps the ideas "sing."</p>
<p>Focuses on a main idea—this should be a specific community that the writer tries to contextualize for the reader—you understand the writer in relation to the community.</p> <p>Provide some background and setting needed to understand the analysis</p> <p>Integrates a thesis based on the discourse community being explored</p> <p>Develops the ideas through expository elements: definitions, examples, narration, description, classify, etc.</p> <p>Adequately incorporates a personal, or unique perspectives and interpretations</p>	<p>Attempts to use ekphrasis, but examples are limited. A master trope is used, but it may not be effective or appropriate.</p> <p>Attempts to address and analyze the chosen aspects; integrates both primary and secondary sources—some are embedded using attributive tags; explains and/or analyzing how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a way that is based in the explanation and analysis.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation are used appropriately. Stylistic deviations make sense. Few errors, none impede understanding. The ideas mostly flow, and there are some transitions to aide understanding.</p>	<p><b>The paper's arrangement is:</b> Clear and logical, it works well to improve the understanding of the ideas. Flows smoothly through the stages: explain, analyze, interpret. Good mix of quoted and paraphrased sources</p> <p>Voice is lively and unique, but still works well to support the ideas and strengths the flow.</p> <p><b>Meets the format requirements:</b> 1250 words or more, double-spaced (approximately 5-6 pages); 12 point, easy to read font such as Times.</p> <p>MLA Heading, Works Cited, and all sources are parenthetical cited (both quotes and paraphrases)</p> <p>At least 3 sources: 1 primary, 1 secondary, and the third may be either primary or secondary.</p>	<p>The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper.</p> <p>Revision add minor details, help the reader's understanding, or try to story the narrative.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.</p>
<p>Notes to improve to meet the standard:</p>	<p>Notes to improve to meet the standard:</p>	<p><b>Does Not Meets the format requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Papers that do not meet the minimum requirements will not be graded.</li> <li>• Revise and Resubmit.</li> </ul>	<p>Note: late papers lose the revision points and potential to revise to improve your grade. If only one draft is submitted, you will lose all the revision points as well. To make up for missing peer revision, you MUST go to The Writing Center, and you are still responsible for including two drafts showing revisions.</p>
_____/40	_____/30	_____/30	_____/50
<p><b>Project Total:</b> _____ / 150</p>			
<p><b>Notes:</b></p>			

## Expository Unit Problem Statement

### ENG 1113 [General Education Assessment Tool] Problem Statement (25 pts.)

Your job is to write a short essay which identifies and analyzes a problem within a topic of your choice. In this essay, you should appeal to your audience, summarize your ideas about the topic, and provide some source support.

Right now, you are constructing a *Problem Statement*. The Problem Statement sets up your research question and provides some source support about the topic you've chosen. In that, it should communicate *what* topic you are working on, generally and specifically, *why* it is worth studying, *who* might be interested and *what* claim(s) you are making about the topic. In other words, you are stating your understanding of the problem/issue you will be writing about and including source support.

For this class, you are researching a discourse community and writing an essay analyzing what it means to be a member of that community. Through your paper, you will demonstrate your ability to communicate according to the conventions and expectations of your audience(s).

- **Primary Claim:** This essay asks you to take a stance and support it with evidence, which might include examples from your own experience, observations of others, or current events, among other possibilities. Your stance must be clear to the reader, and you must connect the evidence you present to the claims you make.

#### Requirements:

- About 2 pages.
- Includes at least one credible, relevant source (which may be supplied by your instructor) that connects in some way to your purpose.
- Organized in a clear way that makes sense for your project (order of importance, etc.)
- Shows fluent development, demonstrating control over grammar and syntax.
- Follows MLA conventions.

## Appendix C: Argumentative Essay Assignment

### *Argumentative Unit Paper: Building Skills for Success*

#### **Project Overview:**

Gladwell reveals that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become an expert in a field. As you begin college, you should strive to build these hours in your chosen field of study. One good way to practice your skills is to conduct research about a topic in your field and write about it. Furthermore, the ability to persuade is a useful skill in most fields. Therefore, for this paper you will choose an arguable topic related to your chosen major, research the topic in order to develop an informed opinion, and then argue this opinion using your research as support.

- **Research:** In order to successfully complete this assignment, you will have to conduct a systematic research to find out multiple arguments and counter arguments about the question of interest in addition to incorporate the results of your research in to a well-organized document.
- **Persuasion:** Throughout the essay you will need to persuade your audience by formulating a clear thesis and supporting your thesis using research based examples. This will require you to carefully analyzing the different points of view and perspectives that are contributing to the conversation surrounding the topic and use this analysis to draw conclusions about the issue and justify your position.
- **Note:** Because some issues tend to lead to black and white thinking and we are striving to build nuanced argumentation skills, divisive and polarizing issues such as gun control, the death penalty, and abortion will not considered as appropriate for this paper.

#### **Writing Goals:**

Effective papers will:

- Engage in an exigent conversation about your specific topic.
- Present a convincing argument supported by properly cited credible research.
- Illustrate integration and synthesis of research sources and authorial voice.
- Thoughtfully consider multiple perspectives by addressing counter-arguments
- Sufficiently utilize textual evidence (quotes and paraphrases) to support the argument
- Demonstrate logos, pathos, ethos, and kairos

#### **Getting Ready to Write: Possible Questions to Consider**

- What am I interested in doing in the future? What research can I do to discover what makes someone successful in this field?
- Is there a topic related to my field of study that excites me—or one I'd love to dig into?
- What societal issues matter to someone in my field?

#### **Requirements:**

- 1000-1500 words, double-spaced (approximately 4-6 pages)
- Cite all sources (quotes AND paraphrases) in MLA format
- MLA-style formatting for headings, margins, line spacing, and page numbers
- 12-point Times New Roman font
- Works Cited Page with at least three credible outside sources

#### **Major Due Dates:**

- Full draft due **in class** for writing workshop and peer review **Wednesday, November 30**
- Full revision due **in class and on Blackboard with your portfolio during your FINAL EXAM Period: December 7<sup>th</sup> (12:00 class) or December 9<sup>th</sup> (1:00 class)**

## Argumentative Essay Rubric

<b><i>Invention</i></b>	<b><i>Argument</i></b>	<b><i>Arrangement</i></b>	<b><i>Revision</i></b>
<p>Provides sufficient and well chosen background and setting needed to understand the analysis</p> <p>Explores strong, well-developed, original ideas throughout the paper that create interest in the topic. Thoroughly explores the issue by presenting both sides of the argument.</p> <p>Presents a unique perspective, which may be demonstrated through personal connection, interpretation, or creative presentation. Incorporates original and/or personal, unique perspectives and interpretations—The exceeds paper provides a unique view that is strongly connected to the writer.</p> <p>Contextualizes the topic: provides background needed to understand the conversation the argument is entering (the problem) and why the chosen position is appropriate.</p>	<p>Incorporates a clear thesis containing a clearly described, arguable claim about the topic.</p> <p>Makes persuasive claims that consistently work together to support your position. Describes counterarguments (objections to the claims) and then refutes them.</p> <p>Describes the rhetorical situation surrounding the topic (conversation, audience, motivation and/or purpose). This tends to be early on as part of the background.</p> <p>Persuasively integrating outside sources to support claims. These sources are consistently cited in MLA format.</p>	<p>The paper's arrangement is clear and logical, it works well to improve the understanding of the ideas. Flows smoothly throughout the argument both between and within the paragraphs. Effectively embeds sources using attributive tags where appropriate. Includes an intriguing introduction that engages the reader's interest, a clear thesis, well-developed body paragraphs based in the modes of argumentation, and a thought provoking conclusion. Voice is lively and unique, but still works well to support the ideas and strengths the flow.</p> <p>Grammar and punctuation are used appropriately. Stylistic deviations make sense. Few errors, none impede understanding.</p> <p><b>Exceeds the format requirements:</b> 1250 words or more, double-spaced (approximately 5-6 pages); 12 point, easy to read font such as Times; MLA Heading, Works Cited, and all sources are parenthetical cited (both quotes and paraphrases); At least 4 secondary sources.</p>	<p>The final draft shows significant revision. It is clear that time and effort were dedicated to improving the paper.</p> <p>Revisions work to add details, enrich the reader's understanding, analysis of the topic, improve the use of ekphrasis, add or refine a trope, or deepen the interpretation.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas. The editing helps the ideas "sing."</p>
<p>Provides sufficient background and setting needed to understand the analysis</p> <p>Explores original ideas throughout the paper that create interest in the topic. Thoroughly explores the issue by presenting both sides of the argument.</p> <p>Tries to present a unique perspective, which may be demonstrated through personal connection, interpretation, or creative presentation. Incorporates original and/or personal, unique perspectives and interpretations—</p> <p>Contextualizes the topic: provides some background and why the chosen position is appropriate.</p>	<p>Incorporates a clear thesis containing a clearly described, arguable claim about the topic.</p> <p>Makes persuasive claims that work together to support your position. Describes counterarguments (objections to the claims) and then refutes them.</p> <p>Describes the rhetorical situation surrounding the topic (conversation, audience, motivation and/or purpose). This tends to be early on as part of the background.</p> <p>Persuasively integrating outside sources to support claims. These sources are consistently cited in MLA format.</p>	<p>The paper's arrangement is somewhat clear and logical, Voice is lively and unique, but still works well to support the ideas and strengths the flow. Tries to use transitions to help with flow throughout the argument. Embeds sources using attributive tags, but not consistently. Some grammar errors, but only occasionally impedes understanding.</p> <p><b>Meets the format requirements:</b> 750- 1250 words (approximately 3-5 pages); Double-spaced, 12 point font; MLA Format (heading, works cited, internal citation) Sources parenthetical cited in MLA format (both quotes and paraphrases). At least 3 secondary sources</p>	<p>The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper.</p> <p>Revision adds minor details, help the reader's understanding, or try to story the narrative.</p> <p>Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.</p>
<p>Notes to improve to meet the standard:</p>	<p>Notes to improve to meet the standard:</p>	<p><b>Does Not Meet the format requirements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Papers that do not meet the minimum requirements will not be graded.</li> <li>• Revise and Resubmit.</li> </ul>	<p>Note: late papers lose the revision points and potential to revise to improve your grade. If only one draft is submitted, you will lose all the revision points as well. To make up for missing peer revision, you <b>MUST</b> go to The Writing Center, and you are still responsible for including two drafts showing revisions.</p>
_____/50	_____/60	_____/40	_____/50
<p><b>Project Total:</b> _____/ 200</p> <p><b>Notes:</b></p>			



## Argumentative Unit Problem Statement

### Argumentative Essay Problem Statement (25 pts.)

#### **Project Overview:**

Gladwell reveals that it takes 10,000 hours of practice to become an expert in a field. As you begin college, you should strive to build these hours in your chosen field of study. One good way to practice your skills is to conduct research about a topic in your field and write about it. Furthermore, the ability to persuade is a useful skill in most fields. Therefore, for this paper you will choose an arguable topic related to your chosen major, research the topic in order to develop an informed opinion, and then argue this opinion using your research as support.

- **Research:** In order to successfully complete this assignment, you will have to conduct a systematic research to find out multiple arguments and counter arguments about the question of interest in addition to incorporate the results of your research in to a well-organized document.
- **Persuasion:** Throughout the essay you will need to persuade your audience by formulating a clear thesis and supporting your thesis using research based examples. This will require you to carefully analyzing the different points of view and perspectives that are contributing to the conversation surrounding the topic and use this analysis to draw conclusions about the issue and justify your position.
- **Note:** Because some issues tend to lead to black and white thinking and we are striving to build nuanced argumentation skills, divisive and polarizing issues such as gun control, the death penalty, and abortion will not considered as appropriate for this paper.

Right now, you are constructing a *Problem Statement*. The Problem Statement sets up your research question and provides some source support about the topic you've chosen. In that, it should communicate *what* topic you are working on, generally and specifically, *why* it is worth studying, *who* might be interested and *what* claim(s) you are making about the topic. In other words, you are stating your understanding of the problem/issue you will be writing about and including source support.

#### **Requirements:**

- About 2 pages.
- Includes at least one credible, relevant source (which may be supplied by your instructor) that connects in some way to your purpose.
- Organized in a clear way that makes sense for your project (order of importance, etc.)
- Shows fluent development, demonstrating control over grammar and syntax.
- Follows MLA conventions.

**Problem Statement Due:** Monday, November 21 on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.

#### **Looking Ahead:**

- Full draft due in class for writing workshop and peer review **Wednesday, November 30**
- Full revision due in class and on Blackboard with your portfolio during your **FINAL EXAM Period: December 7<sup>th</sup> (12:00 class) or December 9<sup>th</sup> (1:00 class)**

## Appendix D: Portfolio

### *The Portfolio Requirements*

**Overview:** The portfolio serves as the final for Freshman Composition. Therefore, in order to meet the standard and pass the class, you must submit a completed portfolio. The Portfolio MUST include:

**Printed Copies of All Essays:**

- Graded Personal Creed Essay w/ the rubric and my comments along with your first draft with peers' comments.
- Graded Expository Essay w/ the rubric and my comments along with your first draft with peers' comments.
- Peer-revised Argumentative Essay w/ the rubric and peers' comments.

**FINAL Printed Copies of All Essays:**

- Final Personal Creed Essay w/ revisions based on my comments.
- Final Expository Essay w/ revisions based on my comments.
- Final Argumentative Essay w/ revisions made on based on peer review.

**Major Revision Project**

- **One essay**, of your choice, should show SIGNIFICANT revisions. This means that after receiving your grade, you took the time to go back and further develop the topic and your writing. This should be the finest example of your writing for this course, and your revisions should show all the ways you have grown as a writer.

**Writing Reflection (See specific instructions in the packet):**

- Write a paragraph describing your reflection and revision process.
- Write a paragraph discussing how you have grown and changed as a writer over the semester.
- Conclude with a paragraph assessing your strengths and weaknesses as a writer along with a consideration of how you can use this knowledge to continue to grow throughout college (and/or your career).

**Portfolio Assessment:**

Meet the Standard (B = 80%)

- 3 revised essays with feedback and rubrics (personal, expository, argumentative)
- 3 final drafts of essays that show evidence of revision
- 1 of the drafts should show Major Revisions--beyond the required revisions for each assignment.
- Writing Reflection (approximately 2 pages)

Exceed the Standard (A = 100%)

- Meets the 1 standard
- Essays show significant evidence of revision (where appropriate)
- Majorly revised essay shows true growth and serves as an exemplar for you as a writer
- Writing Reflection is thoughtful, includes specific examples showing how your revised that are based in your writing over the semester

## *The Portfolio Rubric*

<b>Printed Copies of All Essays</b>		<b>Below</b>	<b>Meets</b>	<b>Exceeds</b>
1.	Personal Creed Essay w/ rubric and comments.			
2.	Expository Essay w/ rubric and comments.			
3.	Peer-revised Argumentative Essay w/ rubric and comments.			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>Printed Copies of All Essays</b>			
<b>FINAL Printed Copies of All Essays</b>		<b>Below</b>	<b>Meets</b>	<b>Exceeds</b>
1.	Final Personal Creed Essay w/ revisions.			
2.	Final Expository Essay w/ revisions.			
3.	Final Argumentative Essay w/ revisions.			
	One Essay with Significant Revisions beyond requirements			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>FINAL Printed Copies of All Essays</b>			
<b>Writing Reflection</b>		<b>Below</b>	<b>Meets</b>	<b>Exceeds</b>
	Describes both your reflection on your writing and your revision process.			
	Discusses how you have grown and changed as a writer over the semester.			
	Assesses your strengths and weaknesses as a writer.			
	Considers how to use this knowledge to grow throughout college.			
<b>Total:</b>	<b>Writing Reflection</b>			
<b>Essay Revisions: Points added to original essay grade</b>		<b>0 pts.</b>	<b>10 pts.</b>	<b>25 pts.</b>
	To what extent is the Personal Creed well-revised based on feedback? Do the changes significantly improve the essay.	No	Some	YES!
	To what extent is the Expository Essay well-revised based on feedback? Do the changes significantly improve the essay?	No	Some	YES!
	To what extent is the Argumentative Essay well-revised based on feedback? Do the changes significantly improve the essay.	No	Some	YES!
<b>Portfolio Total</b>		<b>Below</b>	<b>Meets</b>	<b>Exceeds</b>
<b>Comments:</b>				

### **Portfolio Assessment:**

#### Meet the Standard (120 pts. = B)

- 3 revised essays with feedback and rubrics (personal, expository, argumentative)
- 3 final drafts of essays that show evidence of revision
- 1 of the drafts should show Major Revisions--beyond the required revisions for each assignment.
- Writing Reflection (approximately 2 pages)

#### Exceed the Standard (150 pts. = A)

- Meets the 1 standard
- Essays show significant evidence of revision (where appropriate)
- Majorly revised essay shows true growth and serves as an exemplar for you as a writer
- Writing Reflection is thoughtful, includes specific examples showing how your revised that are based in your writing over the semester

## Appendix E: Outlier Blog

### Blog Posts: Defining Success & Outliers

For this assignment, you will write two blog posts related to our study of Outliers. Throughout Outliers, Gladwell explores ideas of success and the characteristics of successful people. Likewise, through your blogs you will explore concepts introduced by Gladwell. You will have a variety of choices as inspiration. Some suggestions are included below, but you are welcome to propose additional topics.

Every student will sign up for two weeks as blogger. On the chosen weeks, you will be responsible for posting your blog by Friday night at 11:59 p.m., and then for monitoring the discussion board comments over the weekend. Monitoring the blog involves asking questions to the class about your chosen topic, mindfully responding to your peers, and ensuring the discussion remains productive.

As part of this assignment, on the weeks you are not blogging, you will discuss two of your classmates' blog posts. Your responses will be assessed as informal writing according to the informal writing rubric in the syllabus. Furthermore, your overall participation on the blogs will be assessed as part of the final blog grade.

#### Choose Two of the Following Topics:

#1: For this blog, you will work to define an abstract concept that has many meanings for different people: success. Refrain from relying on a dictionary definition in your essay. While dictionaries are useful tools, they offer limited information that doesn't fully capture the complexity and nuance you can offer through your own critically thinking. Instead, strive to create your own, personalized definition of success and then explain why you define success this way.

#2: For this blog, you will analyze your own 'outlier'. To do this, you will select a specific person you consider successful and write a profile that analyzes the factors that lead to his or her success. Then consider why you hold that opinion. Depending on whom you choose, you may or may not know much about the person you are profiling. You have several options for learning more, including personal interviews, web sources, or library research. Helpful resources might include published interviews, memoirs, or even articles in academic journals. You are not required to do a certain kind of research for this essay, but you should try to find accurate and relevant information and cite your sources clearly.

#3: Gladwell uses the word "entitlement" to highlight the difference in Christopher Langan's and Robert Oppenheimer's interactions with authority figures. In this post, explore the concept of "entitlement" in a unique way. For example, you might take the concept of entitlement and use it to analyze the experiences of first-generation college students. One option for this blog is to take something that Gladwell uses as a brief example—like minority graduates of law school—and research that example more thoroughly.

#4: We are concerned this semester with understanding the factors that contribute to a person's success. With that in mind, consider one of the ideas Gladwell discusses—meritocracy, the 10,000-hour rule, the Matthew Effect, practical intelligence—you have many options. Then, use this idea as a lens to explore an aspect of success. For example, you might choose a person who succeeded (or failed) due to the idea you are exploring and consider: How did this person achieve success? What environmental factors influenced his or her success? What choices or behaviors lead to his or her success? What is the role of talent or hard work in his or her success?

#### Specifications for Each Blog:

- 350-500 words per blog, 700-1000 words total
- You may integrate pictures, video links, etc.
- 12-point Times New Roman font for main blog, but additional fonts may be used as stylistic accents

## Outlier Blog Project Rubric

	<b>Blog #1: _____</b>	<b>Blog #2: _____</b>	<b>Responses to Blogs</b>
<b>Exceeds : 45-50 pts.</b>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell in a creative way. The writing shows a strong voice and unique insight.</p> <p>The writing is clear, cohesive and well structured. Errors do not impeded understanding.</p> <p>The blog exceeds the 500 words, going above and beyond the requirements.</p> <p>The blog integrates pictures, video links, poetry, etc.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a clear font, such as 12-point Times, but may use others for creative emphasis.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger monitors the blog by asking questions to the class about your chosen topic, mindfully responding, and ensuring the discussion remains productive.</p>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell in a creative way. The writing shows a strong voice and unique insight.</p> <p>The writing is clear, cohesive and well structured. Errors do not impeded understanding.</p> <p>The blog exceeds the 500 words, going above and beyond the requirements.</p> <p>The blog integrates pictures, video links, poetry, etc.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a clear font, such as 12-point Times, but may use others for creative emphasis.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger monitors the blog by asking questions to the class about your chosen topic, mindfully responding, and ensuring the discussion remains productive.</p>	<p>On weeks you are not assigned to blog, you participate full in the discussion throughout the weekend. <u>To exceed the standard on your non-blogging weeks you should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate at least 80% of the time. This means missing no more than 3 weeks</li> <li>• Follow two blogs throughout the weekend and contribute to the on going discussion.</li> <li>• Contribute more than 3 times on each chosen blog.</li> <li>• Make substantial contributions to the discussions by asking and answering thoughtful questions, writing thorough responses, striving to mention the original blog—and add to their thoughts, ask questions about a position, complement their work.</li> </ul>
<b>Meets: 35-44 pts</b>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell. The writing shows the writer's voice and adds insight.</p> <p>The writing is clear, somewhat cohesive and structured. Errors seldom impeded understanding.</p> <p>The blog meets he 350-500 words.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a clear font, such as 12-point Times.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger attempts to monitors the blog by asking questions to the class about your chosen topic, responding to your peers, and tries to ensure the discussion remains productive.</p>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell. The writing shows the writer's voice and adds insight.</p> <p>The writing is clear, somewhat cohesive and structured. Errors seldom impede understanding.</p> <p>The blog meets he 350-500 words.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a clear font, such as 12-point Times.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger attempts to monitors the blog by asking questions to the class about your chosen topic, responding to your peers, and tries to ensure the discussion remains productive.</p>	<p>On weeks you are not assigned to blog, you participate full in the discussion throughout the weekend. <u>To meet the standard on your non-blogging weeks you should:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate at least 70% of the time. This means missing no more than 4 weeks.</li> <li>• Follow two blogs throughout the weekend and contribute to discussion.</li> <li>• Contribute at least 2 times on each chosen blog.</li> <li>• Make contributions to the discussions. Try to add to the thoughts in the original blog, ask questions about a position, complement their work.</li> </ul>
<b>Does Not Meet: 25-34 pts</b>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell.</p> <p>The writing may not be clear, cohesive and structured. Errors impeded understanding.</p> <p>The blog does not meet 350-500 words.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a hard to read font or has challenging spacing.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger fails to monitor the blog appropriately.</p>	<p>The blog explore concepts introduced by Gladwell.</p> <p>The writing may not be clear, cohesive and structured. Errors impeded understanding.</p> <p>The blog does not meet 350-500 words.</p> <p>The main blog is written in a hard to read font or has challenging spacing.</p> <p>During the weekend, the blogger fails to monitor the blog appropriately.</p>	<p>On weeks you are not assigned to blog, your participation is lacking. <u>To receive more than 50% of the points you must:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate at least 50% of the time. This means missing no more than 6 weeks.</li> <li>• Follow two blogs throughout the weekend and contribute to discussion.</li> <li>• Contribute at least 1 time on each chosen blog.</li> <li>• Attempt to add to the thoughts in the original discussion.</li> </ul>
	<b>Total: _____/50</b>	<b>Total: _____/50</b>	<b>Total: _____/50</b>

**Project Total: \_\_\_\_\_/150**

## Appendix F: Outlier Discussion Questions

### *Outlier Chapter One Discussion*

*For class today, you were supposed to bring answers to the questions below. At your tables, discuss your responses and develop a group response. Be prepared to share your ideas with the class.*

- The chapter begins with a quote from Matthew 25:29: “For everyone that hath shall be given, and she shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” How does Gladwell use that quote to develop his key ideas in the chapter?
- Gladwell discusses how an arbitrary thing like a birthday can contribute to someone’s success. Do you buy this? Why or why not? How does this concept contribute to his argument?
- Gladwell says, “In Outliers, I want to convince you that these kinds of personal explanations of success don’t work. People don’t rise from nothing. We do owe something to parentage and patronage” (19). How do you see that effecting you in your own life and path towards success?

*The questions you just discussed all focus on Gladwell’s content and ideas in the chapter. Now I’d like to you examine Gladwell’s writing. In other words, as a group, I’d like you to explore HOW he develops his ideas.*

1. What is Gladwell’s primary claim in the chapter? How does this claim help to develop the argument for his whole book?
2. In class we discussed the four master tropes, metaphor, irony, metonymy, and synecdoche. Which of these tropes does Gladwell use throughout the chapter to develop his ideas. Cite an example from the text to support your answer.
3. How does Gladwell use ekpharasis in this chapter to develop his ideas? Cite a strong example from the chapter and explain what makes it effective.
4. What other strategies does Gladwell use to support his claim? For example, does he use quotes from experts, data and statistics, detailed examples. Discuss how he uses one of these throughout the chapter and cite specific examples from the text.

## *Outlier Chapter Six & Seven Discussion*

*At your tables, discuss and develop a group response to the following questions.*

1. In chapter six, Gladwell introduces an argument regarding the “culture of honor”? What is his claim? How does this relate to his primary claim regarding success?
2. How does Gladwell use the rhetorical appeals to support his argument in chapter six? Cite two specific examples and explain how each works to support his argument.
3. In chapter seven, Gladwell discusses how our cultural background influences our communication practices. Summarize Gladwell’s primary claim for the chapter. Then, cite two examples of logos he provides to support his argument.
4. Summarize the background information Gladwell provides in either chapter six or seven. Then discuss how the background information works to support/ set up his argument.
5. How does Gladwell use ekphrasis in either chapter six or seven to develop his ideas? How does ekphrasis work as a rhetorical appeal? Cite a strong example from one chapter and explain what makes it effective.

## *Outlier* Chapter Eight, Nine, & Epilogue Discussion

*At your tables, discuss and develop a group response to the following questions.*

1. In chapter nine Gladwell discusses rice paddies, math, and success. How in the world are these ideas related? How does this relationship add to his overall argument?
2. Discuss Marita's experiences in chapter nine. How does her example work with Gladwell's previous arguments? How does Gladwell use pathos and logos to strengthen his claims?
3. Gladwell begins the epilogue with a story. How does this story relate to those that came before? Considering Gladwell's writing style, why is that an appropriate way to wrap up his argument?
4. Examine the passage on p. 285 about Outliers. How does Gladwell bring together all his previous claims in this passage? How does Gladwell bring in his own experiences as evidence?



## Appendix G: Student Identity Tables

ENG 1113 Section One: Literacy Themes						
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes
Laurel	F	Enjoys English; enjoys imaginative projects; citations a struggle	Anxiety issues make groups challenging.  Discusses importance of caring	Elementary teacher  writing plays important role	Anxiety, depression, trauma, drugs	Loving people: teacher, sig. other
Sarah	F	Enjoys English; good at grammar and small level skills.	Quiet, doesn't want to talk but appreciates group projects.  Interacts well with teachers	Doctorate in audiology  Writing is helpful in all fields	Band, music, self-love, faith	Family
Nick *	M	Not a writer; sees no strengths	Enjoys small and large discussions  Teachers point out mistakes	Accountant  Not sure writing will play a role	Health issues, faith	Alcoholism, cancer Friends
Henry	M	Positive about writing; imaginative writing	Enjoys discussions  Teachers appreciated stories	Computer science	Self-realization	
Monica	F	Loves to write; hates reading	Enjoys small then large discussions  Teachers point out important ideas	English teacher/author	Value of time, faith	Addiction, death
Shea	F	Good at detailed writing	Enjoys discussions  Likes projects	Early Childhood	Helping children, depression	Siblings, family, family dysfunction & foster care

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

## ENG 1113 Section Two: Literacy Themes

Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes
Betty	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Enjoys discussions Hands on teaching	Registered dietician; wants to write articles	Self discovery in writing, faith
Caitlin	F	Enjoys English, but not strong writer	Anxiety issues make groups challenging Teach: one on one	Elementary Teacher; writing plays role	Self-love, respect, faith, anxiety
Felicity	F	Enjoys creative parts of English	Enjoys discussions Group work helpful	Elementary Teacher; writing plays role	Poetry's power, anorexia, depression, anxiety
Cathy	F	Struggled with essays; loves poetry	Occasional discussion Direct instruction	Chemistry/ pre-pharmacy; writing help with lab	Self-acceptance, faith
James	M	Not a strong writer	Doesn't enjoy discussion Direct Instruction	Undeclared; not sure	Love of reading
Becky	F	Enjoys creative parts of English; citations a struggle	Enjoys small group discussions shy Learns well any way	Criminal Justice; writing always plays role	Overcoming challenges, LGBT issues, health issues
Nathan	M	Enjoys creative writing ; struggles with ELA rules	Enjoys discussions Teach: one on one	Band director; doesn't see role for writing	Self-confidence, humor
Luke	M	Enjoys essays & reading; struggle with grammar	Enjoys small group discussions Class discussion	Master's to coach football; writing plays role	Influential book, learning from football, preparation, attitude, leadership
Amy	F	Enjoys creative writing; struggles with reports	Enjoys discussions Teachers show kindness/ patience	Accountant; writing seen as done for pleasure	Reading, fan fiction, writing, love, faith, self-realization, suicide
Leia	F	Enjoys reading and writing; sentence struggles	Does not enjoy discussions T. clear & creative	Early Childhood Education; writing helpful	Depression & anxiety
Emily	F	Struggled in ELA	Enjoys small group; not whole Teacher: one on one	Undecided; not sure	Love of reading, faith
Jacob	M	English is easy	Enjoys whole group discussions Teach best you can	Nursing major; writing will help	Choices, success
Gilly	F	Enjoys reading and writing, not a strength	Enjoys class discussions Take notes, listen	Criminal Justice	Power of mystery, changing schools
Alex	M	Enjoys ELA; not a writer	Enjoys whole group discussions Class discussion	Math	Running, determination, love of sport
Brendan	M	Enjoys English; creative writing; research struggle	Enjoys whole group discussions Taking notes	Theater major; English will help with scripts	Faith, protect country

## Literacy Themes—Trauma

Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes
Laurel	F	Enjoys English; enjoys imaginative projects; citations a struggle	Anxiety issues make groups challenging. Discusses caring	Elementary teacher; writing plays important role	Anxiety, depression, trauma, drugs	Loving people: teacher, sig. other
Nick *	M	Not a writer; sees no strengths	Enjoys discussions Teachers help not make same mistakes	Accountant; Not sure writing will play a role	Health issues, faith	Alcoholism, cancer Friends
Monica	F	Loves to write; hates reading	Enjoys small then large discussions Teachers notes/point out important ideas	English teacher/ author	Value of time, faith	Addiction, death
Shea	F	Good at detailed writing	Enjoys discussions Likes projects	Early Childhood	Helping children, depression	Siblings, family, family dysfunction & foster care
Caitlin	F	Enjoys English, but not strong writer	Anxiety issues during group work Teacher: one on one	Elementary Teacher; writing plays role	Self-love, respect, faith, anxiety	Teacher role
Felicity	F	Enjoys creative parts of English	Enjoys discussions Group work helpful	Elementary Teacher; writing plays a role	Poetry's power, anorexia, depression, anxiety	love can transform
Becky	F	Enjoys creative parts of English; citations a struggle	Enjoys small group discussions; shy Learns well any way	Criminal Justice; writing always plays role	Overcoming challenges, LGBT issues, health issues	Family
Amy	F	Enjoys creative writing; struggles with reports	Enjoys discussions Teachers show kindness/patience	Accountant; writing seen as done for pleasure	Reading, fan fiction, writing, love, faith, self-realization, suicide	
Leia	F	Enjoys reading and writing; sentence struggles	Does not enjoy discussions T. clear & creative	Early Childhood Education; writing helpful	Depression & anxiety	Amazing teacher, family, sig other
Emily	F	Struggled in ELA	Enjoys small group; no large groups One on one	Undecided, so not sure	Love of reading, faith	family health, death
Jacob	M	English is easy	Enjoys whole group discussions Best you can	Nursing major; writing will help	Choices, success	Divorce, death
Gilly	F	Enjoys reading and writing, not a strength	Enjoys discussions Take notes	Criminal Justice	Power of mystery, changing schools	Family, abusive relationships

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

Trauma Themes—Strong Writing Identity & Enjoys Discussions (Group One)						
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes
Monica	F	Loves to write; hates reading	Enjoys small then large discussions Teachers notes/point out important ideas	English teacher/author	Value of time, faith	Addiction, death
Shea	F	Good at detailed writing	Enjoys discussions Likes projects	Early Childhood	Helping children, depression	Siblings, family, family dysfunction & foster care
Felicity	F	Enjoys creative parts of English	Enjoys discussions Group work helpful	Elementary Teacher; writing plays a role	Poetry's power, anorexia, depression, anxiety	love can transform
Amy	F	Enjoys creative writing; struggles with reports	Enjoys discussions Teachers show kindness/patience	Accountant; writing seen as done for pleasure	Reading, fan fiction, writing, love, faith, self-realization, suicide	Friendship
Jacob	M	English is easy	Enjoys whole group discussions Teach best you can	Nursing major; writing will help	Choices, success	Divorce, death
Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes						

Trauma Themes—Mixed Identity & Anxiety in Discussions (Group 2)						
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes
Laurel	F	Enjoys English; enjoys imaginative projects; citations a struggle	Anxiety issues make groups challenging. Discusses importance of caring	Elementary teacher; writing plays important role	Anxiety, depression, trauma, drugs	Loving people: teacher, sig. other
Caitlin	F	Enjoys English, but not strong writer	Anxiety issues during group work Teacher: one on one	Elementary Teacher; writing plays role	Self-love, respect, faith, anxiety	Teacher role
Becky	F	Enjoys creative parts of English; citations a struggle	Enjoys small group discussions; shy Learns well any way	Criminal Justice; writing always plays role	Overcoming challenges, LGBT issues, health issues	Family
Leia	F	Enjoys reading and writing; sentence struggles	Does not enjoy discussions T. clear & creative	Early Childhood Education; writing helpful	Depression & anxiety	Amazing teacher, family, sig other

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

Trauma Themes—Weak Writing Identity & Enjoys Discussions (Group 3)							
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes	Revision
Nick *	M	Not a writer; sees no strengths	Enjoys discussions Teachers help not make same mistakes	Accountant; Not sure writing will play a role	Health issues, faith	Alcoholism, cancer Friends	Strong
Emily	F	Struggled in ELA	Enjoys small group; no large groups Teacher: one on one	Undecided, so not sure	Love of reading, faith	family health, death	Strong
Gilly	F	Enjoys reading and writing, not a strength	Enjoys discussions Take notes, listen	Criminal Justice	Power of mystery, changing schools	Family, abusive relationships	Minor

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

## Personal Creed Themes—No Trauma

Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes
Sarah	F	Enjoys English; good at grammar and small level skills.	Quiet, doesn't want to talk but appreciates group projects. Interacts well with teachers	Doctorate in audiology; Writing is helpful in all fields	Band, music, self-love, faith	Family
Henry	M	Positive about writing; imaginative writing	Enjoys discussions Teachers appreciated stories	Computer science	Self-realization	Family
Betty	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Enjoys discussions Hands on teach	Registered dietician; wants to write articles	Self discovery in writing, faith	Teacher role, family, mom faith crisis
Cathy	F	Struggled with essays; loves poetry	Occasional discussion Direct instruction	Chemistry/ pre-pharmacy; writing help with lab	Self-acceptance, faith	Family, friends, teacher inspiration
James	M	Not a strong writer	Doesn't enjoy discussion Direct Instruction	Undeclared; not sure	Love of reading	Responsibilities—to society and others, friendship, family
Nathan	M	Enjoys creative writing; struggles with ELA rules	Enjoys discussions Teach: one on one	Band director; doesn't see role for writing	Self-confidence, humor	
Luke	M	Enjoys essays & reading; struggle with grammar	Enjoys small group discussions Class discussion	Master's to coach football; writing plays role	Influential book, learning from football, preparation, attitude, leadership	
Alex	M	Enjoys ELA; not a writer	Enjoys whole group discussions Class discussion	Math	Running, determination, love of sport	Influence of coach
Brendan	M	Enjoys English; creative writing; research struggle	Enjoys whole group discussions Taking notes	Theater major; English will help with scripts	Faith, protect country	Family support

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

Self-Realization & Social Themes—Strong Writing Identity & Enjoys Discussion (Group Four)							
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes	Revision
Sarah	F	Enjoys English; good at grammar and small level skills.	Quiet, doesn't want to talk but appreciates group projects. Interacts well with teachers	Doctorate in audiology; Writing is helpful in all fields	Band, music, self-love, faith	Family	Some
Henry	M	Positive about writing; imaginative writing	Enjoys discussions Teachers appreciated stories	Computer science	Self-realization	Family	Strong
Betty	F	Enjoys reading and writing	Enjoys discussions Hands on teach	Registered dietician; wants to write articles	Self discovery in writing, faith	Teacher role, family, mom faith crisis	Minor

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

Self-Realization & Social Themes—Mixed Writing Identity & Enjoys Discussions (Group Five)							
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes	Revision
Nathan	M	Enjoys creative writing; struggles with ELA rules	Enjoys discussions Teach: one on one	Band director; doesn't see role for writing	Self-confidence, humor		No final
Luke	M	Enjoys essays & reading; struggle with grammar	Enjoys small group discussions Class discussion	Master's to coach football; writing plays role	Influential book, learning from football, preparation, attitude, leadership		Some
Alex	M	Enjoys ELA; not a writer	Enjoys whole group discussions Class discussion	Math	Running, determination, love of sport	Influence of coach	Minor
Brendan	M	Enjoys English; creative writing; research struggle	Enjoys whole group discussions Taking notes	Theater major; English will help with scripts	Faith, protect country	Family support	Minor

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes

Self-Realization & Social Themes—Weak Writing Identity & Dislike of Discussion (Group Six)							
Pseudonym	Gender	Personal	Social	Future	Individual Themes	Social Themes	Revision
Cathy	F	Struggled with essays; loves poetry	Occasional discussion Direct instruction	Chemistry/pre-pharmacy; writing help with lab	Self-acceptance, faith	Family, friends, teacher inspiration	Strong
James	M	Not a strong writer	Doesn't enjoy discussion Direct Instruction	Undeclared; not sure	Love of reading	Responsibilities—to society and others, friendship, family	Strong

Note: Green = positive feelings; Orange = mixed or neutral feelings; Blue = negative feelings; Red = traumatic themes



## Appendix H. Student Discussion Analysis Charts

### Chapter 1:

<p>The chapter begins with a quote from Matthew 25:29: “For everyone that hath shall be given, and she shall have abundance. But from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.” How does Gladwell use that quote to develop his key ideas in the chapter?</p>			
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b></p> <p>F: Gladwell uses a quote from Matthew as a representation of his ideas. When you first read the quote at the beginning of the chapter, it’s quite difficult to pinpoint its exact meaning. However, once you read through it, you slowly come to understand what the author is trying to convey in this section of the book. Gladwell gradually eases the reader into the idea that if you fully apply yourself in everything you do, you will certainly be rewarded. Although, outside or “outlying” factors can complicate or hinder the abundance of the rewards that you receive. C: If you apply yourself you get rewarded, unless outside factors can complicate your “abundance.”</p>	<p><b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b></p> <p>C: Gladwell uses the quote to state that you can be successful even if you aren’t born with a whole bunch of stuff. If you have everything you should continue to work hard for it. G: Gladwell uses Matthew 25:29 to develop his ideas by saying that you can lose your talent even if you don’t use it. L: I kind of see the quote that if you already have a lot, you will be given more. But if you don’t have much to start out, things will be taken from you. Lu: I kind of see the quote that if you already have a lot you will be given more. But if you don’t have much to start with, things will be taken from you.</p>	<p><b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b></p> <p>A: I think what Gladwell means is that if you have a talent for something then you are more than likely going to be given to you for that talent is instead given to someone else who does have the talent and skill. To be honest I don’t completely agree because even if you don’t have talent you can still achieve the same rank or greater with enough hard work and practice. Anyways, Gladwell uses this to say that this helps some achieve or can be an obstacle to their success. E: When you have an abundance, outside factors may have an effect on that. You have to apply yourself to get rewarded. B: He uses the idea the because certain hockey player are born in certain months it makes them more successful. That your personal goals and ideas contribute to a persons success, as well as the environment they are in.</p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p> <p>A: The quote tells us that when given, if treated well, will be given more. But those who do nothing will have everything taken away. Like the boys in the hockey league, the ones given a lot of opportunities must use them, but if they don’t work hard, in the end, no one will want them, and they’ll have nothing. J: He uses the quote alongside with an idea call accumulative advantage. Which means that a little advantage will increasingly get better for you even if you weren’t that special to begin with. N: Where ever you start off as a date or a place. But they have to put effort forward in it.</p>

Gladwell discusses how an arbitrary thing like a birthday can contribute to someone's success. Do you buy this? Why or why not? How does this concept contribute to his argument?			
1. <b>Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	2. <b>Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	3. <b>Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	4. <b>Alex, James, Nathan</b>
<p>F: I do buy into Gladwell's idea that birthdays can contribute to success because of all of the research and data that has been collected to support it. That much information doesn't just appear out of thin air. It had to have come from multiple sources. The evidence that he presents to the reader helps his argument because it makes the idea harder to reject or ignore when it has various facts to back it up.</p> <p>C: He gives examples of Benjamin Franklin, and he talks about patronage, and people who stand before kings.</p>	<p>C: I think that it makes sense because the older kids have had more time to learn the sport or trade, but what it doesn't say is that if you work hard you can be beyond what the older kids are.</p> <p>G: I believe its true because if your born earlier in the year you start school before others born later in the year.</p> <p>L: I do in a way. Take a thing like Pre-K. If you are born earlier toward the begining of a school year then you will get in and recieve an education earlier. But if you were born after the start, then you have to wait till the next year.</p> <p>Lu: In my opinion it can affect someone's success depending on the person. I believe that because it helps boost confidence at times because you can do thing sooner and get started.</p>	<p>A: I guess it is somewhat possible. If you feel like you matter to someone then you are more likely to accept their encouragement or to try and make them proud. Just feeling like you matter contributes to your success, after all if you don't think you matter then you won't think it will matter if you succeed and thus you won't succeed in the end. So in a roundabout way I guess this concept does agree with his argument because by giving some a birthday party you are giving them a key to their own success.</p> <p>E: Yes, I agree with what Gladwell says about birthdays contributing to success. If you think about it, if these guys wern't born in certain month, they wouldn't have the same oppurtunitys as they would if they were born in June or July. There are always certain factors in life that contribute to success.</p> <p>B: Gladwell believes that hockey players born in early months are better at hockey. I think that's totally false. Anyone can be successful no matter when they were born.</p>	<p>A: In the mannor he is talking about, yes. At such a young age, even a few months difference between two boys can be a huge difference in size, and bigger boys are usually chosen. The boys are given more, and they use the extra training. Like Matthew 25:29 says, they are given, they use it well, and are given an abundance.</p> <p>J: Having played sports when I was younger this concept isn't entirely foriegn to me, for I was born in February. In a way it makes sense, the older the kid, the bigger the kid, the better the kid. That something as unchangeable as your birthday can give someone more oppritunities for success than they might otherwise not of had.</p> <p>N: Yes because of the facts in the charts. He has facts contributing to his argument.</p>

<p>Gladwell says, “In Outliers, I want to convince you that these kinds of personal explanations of success don’t work. People don’t rise from nothing. We do owe something to parentage and patronage” (19). How do you see that affecting you in your own life and path towards success?</p>			
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b></p>	<p><b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b></p>	<p><b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b></p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p>
<p>F: I see these ideas affecting me and my own path to success in one way. These ideas have revealed to me that people become successful due to a variety of outlying factors that surround them. So maybe to reach a higher degree of success in my life. I should focus on trying to make the world and life around me a better place. By doing so, it could generate a positive environment that is more open to advantages and opportunities. C: These ideas don’t help me because I came to college determined to succeed. Why would I be here if I wasn’t. You come to college to get a degree so you can get a job and excel at life.</p>	<p>C: It already has affected my life. My parents have shaped me into the person that I am today. I may work for my own success, but they drive me to get it. Even though I haven’t reached some of my goals yet I know that eventually I will achieve it. G: I don’t believe that your parents have success has anything to do with yours. My parents aren’t “successful” in the money world because they didn’t go to college whereas I’m going to college. L: I agree and disagree. Like if you are born in a higher up family than you have a more likely chance of a better education. But in the same way, even if you are born in a poverty family, you can fight for a better position in the world. Lu: I think these kinds of personal explanations do work for some people. But like if you’re born high up you’re somewhat spoiled and don’t have to work at as much but for someone whos not so lucky they have the chance to work their selves up on the totumpole.</p>	<p>A: My parents are who taught me my definition of success, to be happy with people that I love. My teachers and siblings have given me tools and advice for my future years that do affect my overall success in life. To be honest my true goal is to live a life in God’s spirit, which will lead to a happy life even if it’s not on earth. Even then, I still think that if I didn’t have my parents to go to or the bible then I would become lost and if I become lost then there is no way for me to live my life the way He wants me to live it. E: Well, I am the first person in my family to go to college. I understand this statement because I owe my being here to my mother. She put a lot of work and effort to help me get where I am today. It has effected me in the way of me being the first to attend college in my family. B: I believe that from the time we’re born the people in our lives are influencing us and trying to boost us and make us more successful. They help us our whole lives.</p>	<p>A: Many people think I am this outstanding runner and swimmer, but all of my ability didn’t come from nowhere. I have trained days and nights to do what I’ve done, along with one of the best coaches in Oklahoma. He taught me to strive for what I want, because it just wont come out of nowhere. I had a lot of time, and a great leader, with a supporting family. Without them, I’d be nothing today. J: Having the support of others can really help someone succeed with their life. N: That I can’t do everything by myself. I’m going to need help from other people and use their support to my advantage.</p>

What is Gladwell's primary claim in the chapter? How does this claim help to develop the argument for his whole book?			
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	<b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	<b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell's primary claim is that people don't rise from nothing. They do owe something to their parentage and patronage. Anyone who is successful has most likely benefited from hidden advantages. His claim helps him to develop the argument for the whole book because the other evidence that he provides strongly supports his main claim (i.e. hockey, soccer, baseball, birthday cut off dates, etc.)	His primary claim in the chapter is that other people have more advantages than others. It basically sets the tone for the rest of the book.	His claim is that our success does not depend solely upon us even if we are the main source behind it.	To show that one person's actions doesn't determine their success. The book is about success, and no one contains a gene for success, it's all about what's around you.

In class we discussed the four master tropes, metaphor, irony, metonymy, and synecdoche. Which of these tropes does Gladwell use throughout the chapter to develop his ideas. Cite an example from the text to support your answer.			
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	<b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	<b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell uses irony throughout the chapter to develop his ideas. For example, one would think that a child who studies hard and puts forth the most effort would be the most successful. However, the reality is, "...the oldest children scored somewhere between four and twelve percentile points better than the youngest children" (Outliers 28).	Gladwell uses several ironies in this chapter. An example is the birthday issue. You don't expect to judge success by the day that you were born, but he believes that the older children will be more successful.	He uses irony to compliment the Mathew effect. The typical way you see success is different from the things that actually contribute to success.	Metonymy, because he substitutes the players names with their birthdays. "March 11 starts around one side of the tigers net, leaving the pack for his teammate Jan 4, who passes it to Jan 22." Pg. 23

How does Gladwell use ekphrasis in this chapter to develop his ideas? Cite a strong example from the chapter and explain what makes it effective.			
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	<b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	<b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell uses ekphrasis in this chapter to develop his ideas when he describes the thoughts of Gord Wasden as a proud father.	Gladwell uses ekphrasis to describe the town in extreme detail. When you use ekphrasis to explain things you give the person a visual about the town. He also uses the game to show a lot of detail.	On his explanation of birthday being related to success, he give detailed charts of players and their birthday as well of how successful a career they've had.	Same quote as above, he explains the play in the game exactly how its going on, which gives you a sence of whats happening in real life.

What other strategies does Gladwell use to support his claim? For example, does he use quotes from experts, data and statistics, detailed examples. Discuss how he uses one of these throughout the chapter and cite specific examples from the text.			
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy, Jacob</b>	<b>2. Caitlin, Gilly, Leia, Luke</b>	<b>3. Amy, Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
Gladwell uses data and statistics to support his claim. "...40 percent of the players will have been born between January and March..." (Outliers 23).	Gladwell uses statistics and data. For example, you can look in the chapter and find the hockey roster that shows the specific details about the players.	Gladwell uses the examples of the charts to prove his point. He give details of each player. (such as names, birthday, and position.)	Gladwell uses a roster, with their birthdays in order, to help explain that the earlier a child is born, the more likely they'll be successful. Roster on page 27 & 21.

## Chapter 4:

<p><i>Write an expository paragraph describing Gladwell's conclusions about the relationship between intelligence and success.</i></p> <p><i>In your paragraph, be sure to include all the elements we have been discussing in class:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Begin with a clear claim stating Gladwell's conclusion.</i></li> <li>• <i>Use evidence from <i>Outliers</i> to support your claim (being sure to introduce your evidence appropriately and cite it in MLA format).</i></li> <li>• <i>Then, explain how the cited evidence supports your claim.</i></li> </ul>		
<b>Group One</b>		
<b>Felicity</b>	<b>Cathy</b>	<b>Jacob</b>
<p>Gladwell concludes that IQ gives people an advantage only up to a certain point. After that, what matters is their family background and the community they grew up in. One way he analyzes this idea is by classifying the difference between Chris Langan's upbringing and Oppenheimer's. He states that, "middle class children learn a sense of entitlement" (105). This referred to Oppenheimer as he was born into a rich family. Gladwell then continues by adding that children from poor backgrounds typically displayed a distant, cynical, and subdued nature (105). This referred to Chris Langan due to his family being a subject of poverty. He further explains his point by providing the fact that even though both of the men had insanely high IQs, Oppenheimer grew up to be a moving force in the Manhattan Project, and Langan grew up to be a farmer in Missouri.</p>	<p>If two people are equally intelligent, why is one successful and the other is not? They differ in their amount of success based on their backgrounds.</p> <p>Gladwell concludes that they differ in success because of their backgrounds. He talks about Lewis Terman and his "termites" a experiment about children with high IQs. Gladwell notes that, "In Lareau's words, the middle class children learn a sense of 'entitlement.'" (Gladwell, 105). While the lower class kids have trust issues and are shy. (105) This results in the middle class kids getting what they want more and not being afraid of authority. Meanwhile the working class is too scared to speak up and say what they really want. So in the end, even though they have the same IQs their personal backgrounds set them apart from how successful they will become.</p>	<p>Absent</p>

<p>Write an expository paragraph describing Gladwell's conclusions about the relationship between intelligence and success.</p> <p>In your paragraph, be sure to include all the elements we have been discussing in class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Begin with a clear claim stating Gladwell's conclusion.</li> <li>2 Use evidence from <i>Outliers</i> to support your claim (being sure to introduce your evidence appropriately and cite it in MLA format).</li> <li>3 Then, explain how the cited evidence supports your claim.</li> </ol>	
<b>Group Two</b>	
<b>Caitlin and Gilly *They wrote together because Gilly has a broken wrist.</b>	<b>Luke Leia</b>
<p>Gladwell claims that Oppenheimer has a better advantage over Langan because of his wealth. An example of this is when Gladwell says, "If Christopher had been born into a wealthy family, if he was the son of a doctor who was well connected in some major market, I guarantee you he would have been one of those guys you read about, knocking back PhDs at seventeen" (Gladwell 110). Chistopher didn't have a lot of money, if you read chapters one and two you will find out that he couldn't afford college. As a result of this he went back to work on the farm with his family. Oppenheimer was born into a very wealthy family, therefore he had multiple resources that enhanced his knowledge further on. So with all of this evidence in mind, you can see that the people with more money can afford to higher educators to improve their childs knowledge. Where the middle and lower class can not afford this level of education so their children aren't getting the level to become geniuses even though they have the potential.</p>	Absent

<p>Write an expository paragraph describing Gladwell's conclusions about the relationship between intelligence and success.</p> <p>In your paragraph, be sure to include all the elements we have been discussing in class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Begin with a clear claim stating Gladwell's conclusion.</li> <li>2 Use evidence from <i>Outliers</i> to support your claim (being sure to introduce your evidence appropriately and cite it in MLA format).</li> <li>3 Then, explain how the cited evidence supports your claim.</li> </ol>		
<b>Group Three</b>		
<p><b>Amy</b></p> <p>Gladwell concludes at the end that one's intelligence means very little if there is no drive, support, or want of any kind. At the end of the chapter, he quotes, "By no stretch of the imagination or of standards of geniuses is the 'gifted group' as a whole 'gifted.'" (pg 90). I see that as saying that just because one is smart doesn't mean that their intelligence is their only defining factor. It is their character as a whole; their experiences, their likes, their dislikes, their relationships, it all is what pushes a person to do great things or causes a person to not force their way through every obstical.</p> <p>This is why even if two people are equally intelligent that they may go down two very different paths. We are told out right that a man with a higher IQ has less imagination than one with the lower IQ (Gladwell 88). Being told that tells me that it is not just the intelligence but the person who decides the success.</p>	<p><b>Emily</b></p> <p>Gladwell is stating that two people who are both geniuses, doesn't necessarily mean they both have to be successful. Gladwell interpets and explains the lives of Chris Langan and Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer was a success, because he came from a wealthy family, and from well known parents. Langan on the other hand was not a success but just as much a genius as Oppenheimer. Langan didn't have the opportunities that Oppenheimer did. Gladwell states, "This is the advantage Oppenheimer had and that Chris Langan lacked". (108) This shows to be true, because Chris Langan did many odd jobs, and worked on a farm. While Oppenheimer was sent to the Ethical Culture School and studied physics at Harvard.</p>	<p><b>Becky</b></p> <p>Absent</p>



Write an expository paragraph describing Gladwell's conclusions about the relationship between intelligence and success.

In your paragraph, be sure to include all the elements we have been discussing in class:

- 4 Begin with a clear claim stating Gladwell's conclusion.
- 5 Use evidence from *Outliers* to support your claim (being sure to introduce your evidence appropriately and cite it in MLA format).
- 6 Then, explain how the cited evidence supports your claim.

**Group Four**

<b>James</b>	<b>Nathan</b>	<b>Alex</b>
<p>In the book called the <i>Outliers</i> Gladwell, the author, argues that intelligence alone cannot bring someone success. Their family background and opportunities present also factor in. In his book Gladwell talks about an old study conducted by Dr. Terman on IQ in children and how that will affect their success in their future, but he encountered a problem. Not all of his subjects were being successful, in fact a large number never even finished high school. There was only one explanation for this inconsistency, "In the end, only one thing mattered: family background" (Gladwell 111). The kids who Terman would consider to be "failures" all came from poor family where most of the parents had little education, while the ones who would go on to become doctors and senators came from wealthy families that can provide the opportunities for their little genius to be a big shot.</p>	<p>Gladwell concludes that 2 people with the same IQ will have different success due to upbringing. Gladwell analyzes that Langan and Oppenheimer are different due to the fact of their up-bringing. (91 &amp; 108) Langan, who was brought up in a rather poor environment, was able to graduate from 2 colleges but then ended up becoming a farmer. While Oppenheimer many years before, went to Harvard and Cambridge and later worked on the Mahattan Project. "Is it any wonder Oppenheimer handled the challenges of his life so brilliantly?". (Gladwell 109) With the privileged childhood the Oppenheimer had he had to do great things. Whereas Langan was just not suprising that he became a farmer and didn't use his intelligence to his advantage.</p>	<p>In Gladwell's book <i>Outliers</i>, he tries to tell us all about success and what factors take place to our success. Gladwell analyzes Terman's work and tells us about it. (Gladwell, 74-77) Terman states "There is nothing about an individual as important as his IQ, except possibly his morals" (Gladwell pg 75), but on top of that there are other limiting factors. Gladwell continues to explain Chris Langan's life along with Robert Oppenheimer, two men who are very intelligent, but didn't quite have the same success. (Gladwell 108-109) This tells us it is not about just how smart you are, but other factors, like how you were raised or what you believe in really effects your outcome in life.</p>

**Chapters 6 & 7:**

*At your tables, discuss and develop a group response to the following questions*

<p>In chapter six, Gladwell introduces an argument regarding the “culture of honor”? What is his claim? How does this relate to his primary claim regarding success?</p>		
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b></p>	<p><b>3. Betty, Emily, Brendan</b></p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p>
<p>Gladwell’s claim in Chapter six is that, “Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They have deep roots and long lives...they play such a role in directing attitudes and behavior that we cannot make sense of our world without them” (175). This relates to his primary claim because cultural legacies ultimately factor into one’s ability to become successful.</p>	<p>Cultural legacies are powerful forces. They persist, generation after generation, virtually intact, even as the economic and social and demographic conditions that spawned them have vanished.</p>	<p>He says that cultural background will influence your personality today. Culture and heritage is one of the outlying factors that leads to success.</p>

<p>How does Gladwell use ekpharasis in either chapter six or seven to develop his ideas? How does ekpharasis work as a rhetorical appeal? Cite a strong example from one chapter and explain what makes it effective.</p>		
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b></p>	<p><b>3. Betty, Emily, Brendan</b></p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p>
<p>In chapter seven, he uses ekpharasis, by telling the story of a pilot in a plane crash. It works as a rhetorical appeal because it applies to ethos and gets the reader truly emotionally invested in the story.</p>	<p>Who we are cannot be separated from where we’re from, and we ignore that fact, planes crash. Our ability to succeed relies greatly on where we are from. Being a good pilot and coming from a high-power distance culture is a difficult mix.</p>	<p>He uses ekpharasis to further develop his ideas by drawing us in with intense details, by drawing in readers his ideas will be better accepted. It’s used with pathos to connect to the reader’s emotions.</p>

**Chapters, 8, 9, and Epilogue:**

*At your tables, discuss and develop a group response to the following questions*

<p>In chapter nine Gladwell discusses rice paddies, math, and success. How in the world are these ideas related? How does this relationship add to his overall argument?</p>		
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b></p> <p>All three of these things require an extreme amount of hard work and dedication. As Gladwell states in his book, <i>Outlier</i>, “No one who can rise before dawn three hundred sixty days a year fails to make his family rich” (249). Therefore, if you want to be successful at anything that you do, you must have deep-rooted perseverance.</p>	<p><b>3. Emily, Becky</b></p> <p>All the cultures shaped around the rice agriculture believe that hard work equals success and that contributes to their success in math. It contributes to his argument by, you have to work hard to be successful.</p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p> <p>Gladwell explains in the chapter that making rice paddies and growing rice is not an easy thing to do, but over the years their culture has found ways to perfect their technique. Along with their math skills, it is much easier to count to 40 in Chinese than in English, their culture, and ancestors made it easier for them to learn and prosper.</p>

<p>Discuss Marita’s experiences in chapter nine. How does her example work with Gladwell’s previous arguments? How does Gladwell use pathos and logos to strengthen his claims?</p>		
<p><b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b></p> <p>Marita was a child who was born into poverty; however, she was given a chance to escape it and get a good education which led to her being able to develop her mind. Her example works with Gladwell’s previous argument because when she was given a chance to get a good education, she had to work incredibly hard to become good at what she studied. Gladwell notes, “she will get up at five-forty-five in the morning...and do homework until eleven at night” (267). That shows unbelievable dedication. He uses pathos when he describes Marita’s difficult circumstances and how she fought to overcome them through meaningful work. Gladwell uses logos when he incorporates the data tables depicting the results of what happens during the school year versus what happens over summer vacation. This shows how the poor kids excelled more than the rich kids due to their hard work and perseverance.</p>	<p><b>3. Emily, Becky</b></p> <p>Marita just needed a chance, and it explained to her the miracle of meaningful work. To become a success, Marita wakes up really early and stays late working on homework, only to follow the same routine the next day. Gladwell demonstrates how the achievement gap is due to summer break and allows months of schooling to be undone.</p>	<p><b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b></p> <p>Marita has to wake up really early and stay up late at night to do homework, she doesn’t have the time to talk with her mom or friend. The extra time that Marita and other KIPP students put in for standing makes them more productive students, if given a chance kids in low income families will be able to be very successful in life. He uses pathos by talking about Marita’s life and how her involvement with KIPP made her a great student. And uses logos by discussing about differences in American and Asian schools, the importance of hard work is very crucial in their culture.</p>

Examine the passage on p. 285 about Outliers. How does Gladwell bring together all his previous claims in this passage? How does Gladwell bring in his own experiences as evidence?		
<b>1. Felicity, Cathy</b>	<b>3. Emily, Becky</b>	<b>4. Alex, James, Nathan</b>
In the passage on 285 gladwell states “Their success is not exceptional or mysterious...The outlier, in the end, is not an outlier at all.” Then he goes on to explain how his family history and culture got him to where he is now.	Gladwell makes the points that whether you’re a computer genius, successful lawyer, or professional athlete, everyone’s success is based on opportunities given to them. He brings in that he’s had a privileged life at first due to skin color, and then the advantages of industrialization giving his family a life of fulfillment.	Gladwell explains how history has shaped the way he is today. Gladwell talks about his mother and father and the way they met and how their history formed him.

## Appendix I: Personal Creed Unit Results

### All Students

Table 17. Personal Creed Unit Results: All Students

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	E: 0 M: 7 D: 9	E: 3 M:12 D:1	E: 4 M: 11 D: 1	E: 4 M: 6 D: 6
1:00	E: 3 M: 7 D: 6	E: 1 M:14 D: 1	E: 6 M: 8 D: 2	E: 2 M: 7 D: 7
ALL	E: 3 M: 14D:15	E: 4 M: 26 D:2	E: 10 M: 19 D: 3	E: 6 M: 13 D: 13

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below

Table 18. Personal Creed Unit Results by Trait: All Students

Class	Trait	Focus	Trait	Style	Trait	Arrangement
12:00	Creed	E: 3 M: 10 D: 3	Ek	E: 5 M: 9 D: 2	Log	E: 3 M: 12 D: 1
1:00	Creed	E: 5 M: 9 D: 2	Ek	E: 7 M: 8 D: 1	Log	E: 7 M: 7 D: 2
ALL	Creed	E: 8 M: 19 D: 5	Ek	E: 12 M:17 D:3	Log	E: 10 M: 19 D: 3
12:00	Goal	E: 2 M: 7 D: 7	Trope	E: 3 M: 8 D: 5	Chr	E: 4 M: 11 D: 1
1:00	Goal	E: 4 M: 7 D: 5	Trope	E: 2 M: 8 D: 6	Chr	E: 7 M: 7 D: 2
ALL	Goal	E: 6 M: 4 D:12	Trope	E: 5 M:16 D:11	Chr	E: 11 M: 18 D: 3
12:00	Quote	E: 9 M: 5 D: 2	Gram	E: 4 M: 11 D: 1	For	E: 1 M: 15 D: 0
1:00	Quote	E: 8 M: 2 D: 6	Gram	E: 5 M: 9 D: 2	For	E: 3 M: 11 D: 2
ALL	Quote	E: 17 M: 7 D: 8	Gram	E: 9 M: 20 D: 3	Form	E: 4 M: 26 D: 2

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below; Focus: Creed = Personal Creed; Style: Ek = Ekphrasis; Gram = Grammar; Arrangement: Log = Logic; Chr = Chronological; Form = Format; Revision:

Table 19. Personal Creed Unit Students Who Meet or Exceed the Standard

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	T: 7/16	T: 15/16	T: 15/16	T: 10/16
1:00	T: 10/16	T: 15/16	T: 14/16	T: 9/16
ALL	T: 17/32	T: 30/32	T: 29/32	T: 19/32

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total

Table 20. Personal Creed Unit Grades by Criteria

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Total
12:00	A: 0 B: 7 C: 9 R:0	A: 3 B: 12 C: 0 R: 1	A: 4 B: 11 C: 1 R: 0	A: 0 B: 8 C: 8 R: 0
1:00	A: 3 B: 7 C: 3 R:3	A: 1 B: 14 C: 0 R: 1	A: 6 B: 8 C: 0 R: 2	A: 3 B: 7 C: 4 R: 2
ALL	A: 3 B:14C:12R:3	A: 4 B: 26 C:0 R:2	A: 10 B:19 C:1 R:2	A: 3 B:15 C:12 R:2

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total; R = Revise and Resubmit

## **Goal 2: Students Will Be Able to Integrate Ekphrasis and Tropes in their Writing**

**All Students.** The students met the writing goal by effectively using ekphrasis in their papers. In fact, the students' strongest area was style. 30 students met or exceed the standard for style. If you examine the breakdown for style by trait, the strongest trait was the incorporation of ekphrasis. 29 students met or exceeded. To meet the standard, in the essay the "Ekphrasis tries to draw the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate." 12 students even exceeded in this area. To exceed the "Ekphrasis draws the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate. The reader can "see" the events and through this showing, understand why the events matter to the creed."

The weakest trait was the use of tropes, only 21/32 students met or exceeded in their attempt to use tropes. To meet this standard, "a master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is used where appropriate." 11/32 students did not attempt to incorporate tropes into their creed. Throughout the unit, incorporating rich details to make the reader feel as though they were there was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the Personal Creed unit. Tropes were described as techniques writers use to enhance the writing and make connections in unique ways. Students were only somewhat successful at incorporating tropes into their own writing. Grammar was not directly taught. Instead, the students helped each other with grammar during revision.

Overall, 18 students received an A or B on the paper. Of the remaining students, 12 received a C. 2 students were required to revise and resubmit their papers to receive credit. The main reason students received a C was because of a low grade on their focus and invention

**Participants Only:**

Table 21. Personal Creed Unit Results: Participants Only

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	E: 0 M: 1 D: 4	E: 1 M: 4 D: 0	E: 2 M: 3 D: 0	E: 1 M: 2 D: 2
1:00	E: 3 M: 5 D: 5	E: 1 M: 11 D: 1	E: 5 M: 6 D: 2	E: 2 M: 6 D: 5
ALL	E: 3 M: 6 D: 9	E: 2 M: 15 D: 1	E: 7 M: 9 D: 2	E: 3 M: 8 D: 7

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below

Table 22. Personal Creed Unit Results by Trait: Participants Only

Class	Trait	Focus	Trait	Style	Trait	Arrangement
12:00	Creed	E: 0 M: 4 D: 1	Ek	E: 1 M: 4 D: 0	Log	E: 1 M: 4 D: 1
1:00	Creed	E: 4 M: 7 D: 2	Ek	E: 5 M: 7 D: 1	Log	E: 5 M: 6 D: 2
ALL	Creed	E: 4 M: 11 D: 3	Ek	E: 6 M: 11 D: 1	Log	E: 6 M: 10 D: 3
12:00	Goal	E: 0 M: 3 D: 2	Trope	E: 1 M: 4 D: 0	Chr	E: 2 M: 3 D: 0
1:00	Goal	E: 4 M: 4 D: 5	Trope	E: 2 M: 7 D: 4	Chr	E: 5 M: 6 D: 2
ALL	Goal	E: 4 M: 7 D: 7	Trope	E: 3 M: 11 D: 4	Chr	E: 7 M: 9 D: 2
12:00	Quote	E: 3 M: 1 D: 1	Gram	E: 1 M: 4 D: 0	For	E: 0 M: 5 D: 0
1:00	Quote	E: 6 M: 2 D: 5	Gram	E: 3 M: 8 D: 2	For	E: 3 M: 8 D: 2
ALL	Quote	E: 9 M: 3 D: 6	Gram	E: 4 M: 12 D: 2	For	E: 3 M: 13 D: 2

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below; Focus: Creed = Personal Creed; Style: Ek = Ekphrasis; Gram = Grammar; Arrangement: Log = Logic; Chr = Chronological; Form = Format

Table 23. Personal Creed Unit Students Who Meet or Exceed the Standard Participants Only

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	T: 1/5	T: 5/5	T: 5/5	T: 3/5
1:00	T: 8/13	T: 12/13	T: 11/13	T: 8/13
ALL	T: 9/18	T: 17/18	T: 16/18	T: 11/18

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total

Table 24. Personal Creed Unit Grades by Criteria: Participants Only

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Total
12:00	A: 0 B: 1 C: 4 R:0	A: 1 B: 4 C: 0 R: 0	A: 1 B: 4 C: 0 R: 0	A: 0 B: 2 C: 3 R: 0
1:00	A: 3 B: 5 C: 2 R:3	A: 1 B: 11 C: 0 R:1	A: 4 B: 7 C: 0 R: 2	A: 3 B: 5 C: 3 R: 2
ALL	A: 3 B: 6 C: 6 R:3	A: 2 B: 15 C: 0 R:1	A: 5 B:11 C: 0 R: 2	A: 3 B: 7 C: 6 R: 2

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total; R = Revise and Resubmit

**Participants.** The students met the writing goal by effectively using ekphrasis in their papers. In fact, the students’ strongest area was style. 17 students met or exceed the standard for style. If you examine the breakdown for style by trait, the strongest trait was the incorporation of ekphrasis. 17 students met or exceeded. To meet the standard, in the essay the “Ekphrasis tries to draw the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate.” 5 students even exceeded in this area. To exceed the “Ekphrasis draws the reader into the story (establishes setting, characters, etc. where appropriate) by showing the story to the reader and includes dialogue where appropriate. The reader can “see” the events and through this showing, understand why the events matter to the creed.” One of best examples of ekphrasis was written by Felicity. When describing the challenge she went through due to anorexia nervosa, she wrote, “Even though a winter may leave you cold and bare, spring will always come again and warm the bitter air. I went through a winter of my own at the beginning of my sophomore year of high school. The doctors diagnosed me with a disease called anorexia nervosa.” This short excerpt uses the metaphor of the seasons to help paint a picture of emotional struggle. Examples from all the participating students can be found in Appendix F.



The weakest trait was the use of tropes, 13 students met or exceeded in their attempt to use tropes. To meet this standard, “a master trope (metaphor, irony, synecdoche, metonymy) is used where appropriate.” 4 students did not attempt to incorporate tropes into their creed. Throughout the unit, incorporating rich details to make the reader feel as though they were there was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the Personal Creed unit. Tropes were described as techniques writers use to enhance the writing and make connections in unique ways. The participants were successful at incorporating tropes into their own writing. Even though that was their lowest trait, 13 of them still met the standard. Nathan wrote a good example of effectively incorporating a trope. In his paper he used a personality trait, “WOO,” which stands for “Winning Others Over” as an extended metaphor through his paper. He uses the trait to discuss his values and goals. Other examples of tropes can be found in Appendix F.

The difference in strong traits vs. weak traits was not as extreme in the participants. Most of the students met the standard for every trait. Overall, 10 students received an A or B on the paper itself (not including the points for revision). Of the remaining students, 6 received a C. 2 students were required to revise and resubmit their papers to receive credit. The main reason students received a C was because of a low grade on their focus and invention.

### **Reflection Goal Analysis (Goal #3)**

**All Students.** The structure of this assignment was inherently reflective. For the assignment, the students were asked to develop a personal creed, which is a statement describing what you value and how these values reflect your identity as a person. To help them develop this creed, they wrote a series of reflective journals exploring the circumstances, people, events, and values that shaped them throughout their lives. Then, the students were given steps to help them use their journals, reflect, and use that reflection along with your informal writings to write a paper that explores the important aspects of their lives in narrative form and uses the events to demonstrate why their creed resonates in their lives. The students did a good job writing creed statements and illustrating them through the events in their lives. 27 wrote a creed statement that met the standard. To meet the standard, the students needed to include “A clear creed statement that is grounded in the chosen examples. A focused narrative that illustrates aspects in your life and tries to develop significance.” The students were also supposed to illustrate their creed by choosing a quote or saying that reflects their creed. The goal by finding quotes was to make connections between their lives and important ideas conveyed by others. 24 students successfully chose quotes. 17 exceeded in this area and another 7 met the standard showing they attempted to find a strong quote, but the link may not have been clear. This was a minor aspect of the assignment. As far as a reflective activity, the students were not successful at using this reflection to develop goals for the future. Only 10/32 students successfully incorporated a goal.

To meet the standard, the students were supposed to integrate: “A goal for the future that somewhat aligns with your creed and vision of success. Attempts to analyze how your creed and your goal will help you be successful throughout college.” Students either forgot to include a goal or did not show how it related to their creed. The assignment directions explicitly asked the students to “make a plan to live the values you presented over the next five or ten years.” The students did not use their reflections to create a plan for the future. For some reason, they weren’t able to use their past to plan for the future.

Only 19 students met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard “The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper. Revision adds minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.” The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts. In an effort to encourage peer revision, peer review day was mandatory. If students did not attend the peer review session, they were required to go to The Writing Center to receive credit. Revision was also worth 50 points of their 150 point essay grade. Due to the personal nature of the assignment and my desire to build student trust, revision was not a major focus for this essay. We did have two days of peer review in class, but the students were only asked to bring excerpts they felt comfortable sharing with others. After completing peer review over the excerpts, the students completed an additional self-revision activity.

**Participants.** The participants did a good job writing creed statements and illustrating them through the events in their lives. 15 wrote a creed statement that met the standard. To meet the standard, the students needed to include “A clear creed statement that is grounded in the chosen examples. A focused narrative that illustrates aspects in your life and tries to develop significance.” The students were less successful at illustrating their creed by choosing a quote or saying that reflects their creed. The goal by finding quotes was to make connections between their lives and important ideas conveyed by others. 12 participants successfully chose quotes. 9 exceeded in this area and another 3 met the standard showing they attempted to find a strong quote, but the link to their creed may not have been clear. This was a minor aspect of the assignment. As far as a reflective activity, the students were not successful at using this reflection to develop goals for the future. Only 12 participants successfully incorporated a goal. To meet the standard, the students were supposed to integrate: “A goal for the future that somewhat aligns with your creed and vision of success. Attempts to analyze how your creed and your goal will help you be successful throughout college.” Students either forgot to include a goal or did not show how it related to their creed. The assignment directions explicitly asked the students to “make a plan to live the values you presented over the next five or ten years.” The students did not use their reflections to create a plan for the future. For some reason, they weren’t able to use their past to plan for the future.

11 participants met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard “The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper.

Revision adds minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.” The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts.

**Unit Reflections.** To ascertain the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal, students will be able to reflect on their own learning, students anonymously completed guided unit reflection questions at the end of each unit. The questions were designed to gauge what they believe about their learning in the unit as well as to give the students an opportunity to guide instruction in the next unit. The same questions were asked each time:

- Summarize: What are some key ideas you learned this unit.
- What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **most** useful for learning to write?
- What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **least** useful for learning to write?
- What would you like to see us discuss in the new unit? Are there ideas and/or resources that I could bring in to help your understandings?
- How do you see the ideas in the first unit helping you in our new unit?
- How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer?

The frequencies of responses were tallied (Shank, 2002). These reflections were also segmented by research question, notes were made in the margins, and the notes were used to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013). The responses were compiled into a table that can be found in Appendix F.

In response to the question: What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **most** useful for learning to write? 12 students discussed the personal creed journals. One wrote, “I liked the personal creeds and building up my writing skills that way.” Writing techniques such as tropes and ekphrasis were mentioned 15 times. One student replied, “I liked learning about ekphrasis because it made me write my essay more detailed.” 3 students mentioned the group activities as being most useful. In general students felt that all the experiences were useful since 12 people answered, “all the experiences were useful,” and that was the most common answer to the question: What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **least** useful for learning to write? However, 4 people felt that the blog responses were not useful, and that was the only item that was mentioned by more than one person. 13 students talked about descriptive writing techniques such as tropes and descriptive details the question: How do you see the ideas in the first unit helping you in our new unit? Overall, the unit reflections reveal that the students were able to see the value in learning to write with rich details and incorporate tropes in their writing. They talked about these traits as being among the most useful experiences they learned and recognized that descriptive writing to “make writing relatable” and “keep the reader interested” would play a role in the next unit. Students also say how delving into their values and goals could be useful. One student wrote, “The personal creed is a practice writing to find yourself, and for your own opinions. Research papers are your opinions supported by research evidence.”

**Students Reflections on Their Learning During Unit One:** The unit reflections contain a question to assess the students’ perspective of their growth:

How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer? On the end of the first unit reflections, five students noted that they were gaining confidence as writers and speakers. One student wrote, “getting feedback and support from the class is nice and helps to build writing confidence.” Ten mentioned ideas related to self-discovery showing connections between the self-exploration in the unit writing and the exploration in the discussion. One noted, “All essays and writings come from you, your opinions and who you are, further embedding your personalities and beliefs, while also making you write to improve grammar tropes, styles, and more.” Another student wrote, “The discussions are working to help shape my identity as a college student and a writer because it’s helping me contemplate where I am in life and where and how to get where I want to be.” Three students noted that they were gaining by listening to other perspectives. One student expressed this well by saying, “When I don’t fully understand something, I get to hear others opinions, so that I can make my assumptions as well. As a college student, it has shown me that it is okay to talk to other people, and listen to their ideas and point of views.” However, one student said they could not participate in discussions due to anxiety and another said the discussions were not helping shape them as a writer or college student. Two expressed that they weren’t sure the discussion were having an effect. One person said, “I feel like unless you’re in the right group you either get distracted or don’t really talk.”

Overall, the students perceive the class discussions as having a positive influence on their learning. The students discuss how they are becoming more confident, learning more about who they are as a person, and are feeling more

comfortable sharing their opinions with others. This student expresses that some are even seeing the potential for growth in the future. They state, “The discussions have been great. The more and more we do them, the better we will get.”



## Appendix J: Expository Essay Unit Results and Analysis

### All Students

Class	Invention	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	E: 4 M: 9 B: 4	E: 0 M: 15 B: 2	E: 1 M: 12 B: 4	E: 6 M: 6 B: 5
1:00	E: 4 M: 11 B: 0	E: 2 M: 12 B: 1	E: 2 M: 11 B: 2	E: 8 M: 7 B: 0
ALL	E: 8 M: 19 B: 4	E: 2 M: 27 B: 3	E: 3 M: 21 B: 6	E: 14 M: 13 B: 5

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below

Class	Trait	Invention	Trait	Style	Trait	Arrangement
12:00	Focus	E: 6 M: 9 B: 2	Ek	E: 7 M: 9 B: 1	Log	E: 3 M: 6 B: 7
1:00	Focus	E: 11 M: 4 B: 0	Ek	E: 13 M: 2 B: 0	Log	E: 3 M: 11 B: 1
ALL	Focus	E: 17 M: 13 B: 2	Ek	E: 20 M: 11 B: 1	Log	E: 6 M: 17 B: 8
12:00	Back	E: 4 M: 7 B: 6	Integrate	E: 0 M: 12 B: 5	Voice	E: 4 M: 10 B: 3
1:00	Back	E: 6 M: 6 B: 3	Integrate	E: 2 M: 12 B: 1	Voice	E: 3 M: 11 B: 1
ALL	Back	E: 10 M: 13 B: 9	Integrate	E: 2 M: 24 B: 6	Voice	E: 7 M: 21 B: 4
12:00	Devel	E: 4 M: 8 B: 5	Gram	E: 4 M: 10 B: 3	For	E: 1 M: 11 B: 2
1:00	Devel	E: 7 M: 7 B: 1	Gram	E: 8 M: 7 B: 0	For	E: 2 M: 11 B: 2
ALL	Devel	E: 11 M: 15 B: 6	Gram	E: 12 M: 17 B: 3	For	E: 3 M: 22 B: 4
12:00	Pers	E: 5 M: 9 B: 2				
1:00	Pers	E: 9 M: 6 B: 0				
ALL	Pers	E: 14 M: 15 B: 2				

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below; Invention: Back = Background, Devel = Development, Pers = Personal voice; Style: Ek = Ekphrasis, Integrate = Source Integration, Gram = Grammar; Arrangement: Log = Logic; Chr = Chronological; Form = Format

Class	Invention	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	T: 13/17	T: 15/17	T: 13/17	T: 12/17
1:00	T: 12/15	T: 14/15	T: 13/15	T: 15/15
ALL	T: 25/32	T: 29/32	T: 26/32	T: 27/32

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total

**All Students.** The students met the writing goal by effectively integrating sources in their papers. 29 students met or exceed the standard for style. If you examine the breakdown for style by trait, the strongest trait was the incorporation of ekphrasis. 31 students met or exceeded. To meet the standard, in the essay the “attempts to use ekphrasis, but examples are limited.”

20 students even exceeded in this area. To exceed the “Ekphrasis draws the reader into the essay by bringing examples to life for the reader.” The students improved in their use of ekphrasis from Unit One when 29 students met or exceeded and only 12 students exceeded.

The weakest category was invention, which was not a goal for the unit. Only 25 participants met or exceeded the standard for invention. The weakest trait was providing sufficient background information. 25 students provided sufficient background. 9 did not meet the standard for this trait. In fact, not providing sufficient background information was the primary reason students did not meet the standard for invention.

26 students met or exceeded at integrating sources. To meet this standard, the essay needs to “attempt to address and analyze the chosen aspects; integrates both primary and secondary sources—some are embedded using attributive tags; explains and/or analyzes how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a way that is based in the explanation or analysis.” 6/32 students did not effectively integrate sources into their essay. Throughout the unit, incorporating sources was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the unit. 81% of the students successfully incorporated evidence into their essays. Overall, 18 students received an A or B on the paper. Of the remaining students, 9 received a C. 5 students were required to revise and resubmit their papers to receive credit. The main reasons students received a C were because of a low grade on invention and/or a lack of sufficient source integration.

## Participants Only

Table 36. Expository Essay Results: Participants

Class	Focus	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	E: 1 M: 1 B: 4	E: 0 M: 2 B: 4	E: 2 M: 4 B: 0	E: 2 M: 1 B: 3
1:00	E: 3 M: 5 B: 5	E: 1 M: 10 B: 2	E: 5 M: 6 B: 2	E: 7 M: 6 B: 0
ALL	E: 4 M: 6 B: 9	E: 1 M: 12 B: 6	E: 7 M: 10 B: 2	E: 9 M: 7 B: 3

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below

Table 37. Expository Essay Results by Trait: Participants

Class	Trait	Invention	Style	Trait	Arrangement
12:00	Focus	E: 1 M: 5 B: 1	Ek	E: 2 M: 4 B: 0	Log
1:00	Focus	E: 9 M: 4 B: 0	Ek	E: 12 M: 1 B: 0	Log
ALL	Focus	E: 10 M: 8 B: 1	Ek	E: 14 M: 5 B: 0	Log
12:00	Back	E: 0 M: 3 B: 3	Integrate	E: 0 M: 6 B: 0	Voice
1:00	Back	E: 5 M: 5 B: 3	Integrate	E: 2 M: 8 B: 3	Voice
ALL	Back	E: 5 M: 8 B: 6	Integrate	E: 2 M: 14 B: 3	Voice
12:00	Devel	E: 1 M: 3 B: 2	Gram	E: 0 M: 6 B: 0	For
1:00	Devel	E: 5 M: 7 B: 1	Gram	E: 6 M: 7 B: 0	For
ALL	Devel	E: 6 M: 10 B: 3	Gram	E: 6 M: 13 B: 0	For
12:00	Pers	E: 1 M: 4 B: 1			
1:00	Pers	E: 8 M: 5 B: 0			
ALL	Pers	E: 9 M: 9 B: 1			

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below; Invention: Back = Background, Devel = Development, Pers = Personal voice; Style: Ek = Ekphrasis, Integrate = Source Integration, Gram = Grammar; Arrangement: Log = Logic; Chr = Chronological; Form = Format

Table 38. Expository Essay Participants Who Meet or Exceed the Standard

Class	Invention	Style	Arrangement	Revision
12:00	T: 2/6	T: 3/6	T: 5/5	T: 3/5
1:00	T: 8/13	T: 11/13	T: 12/14	T: 8/13
ALL	T: 10/19	T: 14/19	T: 17/19	T: 11/19

Note: Green Highlight = Strength; Blue Highlight = Weakness; T = Total

**Participants.** The participants who turned in their essays met the writing goal by effectively integrating sources in their papers. 14 participants met or exceed the standard for style, which is 74%. If you examine the breakdown for style by trait, the strongest trait was the incorporation of ekphrasis. 19 participants met or exceeded. To meet the standard, in the essay the “attempts to use ekphrasis, but

examples are limited.” 12 students even exceeded in this area. To exceed the “Ekphrasis draws the reader into the essay by bringing examples to life for the reader.” The participants improved in their use of ekphrasis from Unit One when 17 met or exceeded and only 1 participant exceeded.

The weakest category was invention, which was not a goal for the unit. Only 10 participants met or exceeded the standard for invention. The weakest trait was giving sufficient background information. Only 13 participants met or exceeded at providing enough background. To meet the standard for background, the essay had to “provide some background and setting needed to understand the analysis.” 6 essays lacked background information. In fact, this was the main reason participants did not meet the standard for invention. 15 students met or exceeded at integrating sources. To meet this standard, the essay needs to “attempt to address and analyze the chosen aspects; integrates both primary and secondary sources—some are embedded using attributive tags; explains and/or analyzes how the sources work to support the thesis. Interprets ideas in a way that is based in the explanation or analysis.” 3 participants did not effectively integrate sources into their essay. Throughout the unit, incorporating sources was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the unit. Overall, 84% of the participants who turned in essays successfully incorporated evidence into their essays.

Overall, 10 participants received an A or B on the paper itself (not including the points for revision). Of the remaining students, 7 received a C. 2 were required to revise and resubmit. The main reason students received a C was because of a low grade on invention for not including background information.

### **Reflection Goal Analysis (Goal #3)**

**All Students.** 28 students met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard “The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper. Revision adds minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.” The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts. In an effort to encourage peer revision, peer review day was mandatory. If students did not attend the peer review session, they were required to go to The Writing Center to receive credit. Revision was also worth 50 points of their 150 point essay grade.

**Participants.** 17 participants met or exceeded the standard for revision on their papers. Revision was not broken down by trait, but to meet the standard “The final draft shows revision. It is clear that some time and was made to improve the paper. Revision adds minor details, help the reader’s understanding, or try to story the narrative. Editing is done to remove errors and increase the flow of ideas.” The students who did not meet the standard only made minor changes or failed to attend peer review and submit revised drafts.

**Unit Reflections.** To ascertain the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal, students will be able to reflect on their own learning, students anonymously completed guided unit reflection questions at the end of each unit. The questions were designed to gauge what they believe about their learning in the unit as well as to give the students an opportunity to guide instruction in the next unit. The same questions were asked each time. The frequencies of responses were tallied (Shank, 2002). These reflections were also segmented by research question, notes were made in the margins, and the notes were used to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013).

18 students completed unit reflections for Unit Two. In response to the question: What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **most** useful for learning to write? 4 students discussed expository essay writing. One wrote, “How to tell it as it is, without it being an argumentative essay.” Closely related to that, 3 students felt that the expository essay notes were most useful. 4 students discussed learning about research and citation. 3 students mentioned peer review. One student replied, “I found the peer workshop activities most useful for learning to write expository essays.” 6 students mentioned the group discussions and activities as being most useful. One wrote, “I enjoyed doing group discussions and really like learning about ekphrasis. I also really liked blogging.” In general students felt that all the experiences were useful since 12 people answered, “all the experiences were useful,” and that was the most common answer to the question: What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **least** useful for learning to write? “All were useful” was the only item that was mentioned by more than one person. 6 Students discussed the value of both ekphrasis and sources in answer to the question: How do you see the

ideas in the first unit helping you in our new unit? 3 more mentioned just ekphrasis, and 3 just discussed sources and citation. 5 discussed how knowing how to structure an essay would be most beneficial. One student expressed the value of their prior learning for the new unit particularly well saying, “In this unit, I will have to be relying on the logos of other people. Therefore, I will need to use my previous knowledge of citation methods to incorporate their professional statements. In addition, by using ekphrasis and/or trope, I will be able to communicate my message vividly and effectively.”

**Students Reflections on Their Learning During Unit Two:** The unit reflections contain a question to assess the students’ perspective of their growth: How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer? On the Unit Two reflections, 2 students noted that they were gaining confidence as writers and speakers. One student wrote, “I think they help because I am learning to tell people my opinion and to not think all my ideas are stupid.” 2 mentioned ideas related to self-discovery showing connections between the self-exploration in the unit writing and the exploration in the discussion. One noted, “The more we learn and write, the more I discover about myself and my thoughts and opinions. Now I know how to fully formulate my thoughts so that others understand also.” 5 students noted that they were gaining by listening to other perspectives. One student said, “I’ve been putting more thought into actions and interactions, how something simple can be deep and something complex can be interesting.”

This unit, students also mentioned how the discussions were improving their writing and/or thinking. 4 students said the discussions were improving their writing, and 3 mentioned deeper thinking. One stated, “Our discussions are helping me think deeper into my writing. It is a great tool to use to help students practice their writing.” While another mentioned thinking and writing saying, “It’s helping my creative thinking and improving my writing skills, which I’ve loved doing since I was a kid.”

This unit, only one student expressed a negative perspective. This student wrote, “Our writings are showing me that I am not as good of a writer as I once thought I was.” Overall, the students perceive the class discussions as having a positive influence on their learning. Like during Unit One, the students discuss how they are becoming more confident, learning more about who they are as a person, and are feeling more comfortable sharing their opinions with others. This time, the students seem to be noticing that there is a relationship between the class discussion skills and writing. One student summarized all the aforementioned ways the discussions were helping by writing, “Our discussions have helped me:

- Become more outspoken and assertive with my thoughts and ideas
- Overcome my fear of meeting and speaking to new people
- Gain a vast amount of knowledge about English composition that I will undoubtedly use both during my college career and throughout my entire life”



## Appendix K: Final Portfolio Results and Analysis

Table 48. Final Portfolio Comparison Chart: All Students

Class	Essay	Final Essay	Aspect	Reflection	Essay	Revisions
12:00	PC	E: 11 M: 6 B: 1	Prog	E: 9 M: 4 B: 2	PC	E: 8 M: 6 B: 4
1:00	PC	E: 7 M: 9 B: 3	Prog	E: 7 M: 5 B: 0	PC	E: 7 M: 5 B: 7
ALL	PC	E: 18 M: 15 B: 4	Prog	E: 16 M: 9 B: 2	PC	E: 15 M: 11 B: 11
12:00	EE	E: 7 M: 9 B: 2	Grow	E: 9 M: 4 B: 2	EE	E: 4 M: 9 B: 5
1:00	EE	E: 7 M: 6 B: 6	Grow	E: 7 M: 5 B: 0	EE	E: 4 M: 7 B: 7
ALL	EE	E: 14 M: 15 B: 8	Grow	E: 16 M: 9 B: 2	EE	E: 8 M: 16 B: 12
12:00	AE	E: 6 M: 7 B: 5	Str/Wk	E: 8 M: 5 B: 2	AE	E: 5 M: 8 B: 5
1:00	AE	E: 4 M: 7 B: 4	Str/Wk	E: 7 M: 4 B: 1	AE	E: 3 M: 7 B: 7
ALL	AE	E: 10 M: 14 B: 9	Str/Wk	E: 15 M: 9 B: 3	AE	E: 8 M: 15 B: 12
12:00	Sig	E: 8 M: 7 B: 3	Use	E: 8 M: 1 B: 6	Over	E: 6 M: 9 B: 3
1:00	Sig	E: 7 M: 3 B: 7	Use	E: 5 M: 1 B: 6	Over	E: 6 M: 6 B: 5
ALL	Sig	E: 15 M: 10 B: 10	Use	E: 13 M: 2 B: 12	Over	E: 12 M: 15 B: 8

Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below  
 Essay: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Sig = Significant Revisions  
 Reflections: Prog = Progress; Grow = Growth; Str/ Wk = Strength and Weaknesses; Use = Usefulness  
 Revisions: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Overall = Overall Portfolio; Miss = Missing

Table 49. Final Portfolio Students Who Meet or Exceed the Standard

Class	Essay	Final Essay	Aspect	Reflection	Essay	Revisions
12:00	PC	T: 17/18	Prog	T: 13/15	PC	T: 14/18
1:00	PC	T: 16/19	Prog	T: 12/12	PC	T: 12/19
ALL	PC	T: 33/37	Prog	T: 25/27	PC	T: 26/37
12:00	EE	T: 16/18	Grow	T: 13/15	EE	T: 13/18
1:00	EE	T: 13/19	Grow	T: 12/12	EE	T: 11/19
ALL	EE	T: 29/37	Grow	T: 25/27	EE	T: 24/37
12:00	AE	T: 13/18	Str/Wk	T: 13/15	AE	T: 13/18
1:00	AE	T: 11/15	Str/Wk	T: 11/12	AE	T: 10/15
ALL	AE	T: 24/33	Str/Wk	T: 24/27	AE	T: 23/33
12:00	Sig	T: 15/18	Use	T: 9/15	Over	T: 15/18
1:00	Sig	T: 10/19	Use	T: 6/12	Over	T: 12/19
ALL	Sig	T: 24/37	Use	T: 15/27	Over	T: 27/37
12:00	Miss	0 missing	Miss	3 missing	Pass	18/18
1:00	Miss	4 missing AE	Miss	7 missing	Pass	17/19
ALL	Miss	4 missing AE	Miss	10 missing	Pass	35/37

Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below  
 Essay: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Sig = Significant Revisions  
 Reflections: Prog = Progress; Grow = Growth; Str/ Wk = Strength and Weaknesses; Use = Usefulness  
 Revisions: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Overall = Overall Portfolio; Miss = Missing

Holistically, the students were less successful on the argumentative paper than their previous papers (Table 48). The scores reflect the final revisions for each paper. By the end of the semester, 33 out of 37 students wrote a personal creed that met or exceeded the standard. This means that 89% of the students wrote a personal creed that received an A or B by the end of the course. 18 students even exceeded the standard for their personal creed. 29 students, 78%, wrote an expository paper that met or exceeded the standard. Of these students, 14 exceeded the standard for the expository paper. The students were also required to make significant revisions to one paper. 24 students, 65%, significantly improved the quality of at least one paper through revision. While that number does not seem impressive, it is worth noting that some of the students entered the portfolio revision process with strong papers that already exceeded the standard. It was not surprising that some of these papers showed less growth.

Table 50. Final Portfolio Comparison Chart: Participants

Class	Essay	Final Essay	Aspect	Reflection	Essay	Revisions
12:00	PC	E: 4 M: 2 B: 0	Prog	E: 2 M: 1 B: 2	PC	E: 4 M: 0 B: 2
1:00	PC	E: 6 M: 6 B: 3	Prog	E: 5 M: 4 B: 0	PC	E: 6 M: 3 B: 6
ALL	PC	E: 10 M: 8 B: 3	Prog	E: 7 M: 5 B: 2	PC	E: 10 M: 3 B: 8
12:00	EE	E: 3 M: 3 B: 0	Grow	E: 2 M: 1 B: 2	EE	E: 3 M: 3 B: 0
1:00	EE	E: 6 M: 5 B: 4	Grow	E: 5 M: 4 B: 0	EE	E: 4 M: 5 B: 6
ALL	EE	E: 9 M: 7 B: 4	Grow	E: 7 M: 5 B: 2	EE	E: 7 M: 8 B: 6
12:00	AE	E: 2 M: 2 B: 2	Str/Wk	E: 2 M: 1 B: 2	AE	E: 2 M: 2 B: 2
1:00	AE	E: 3 M: 6 B: 3	Str/Wk	E: 5 M: 3 B: 1	AE	E: 2 M: 4 B: 6
ALL	AE	E: 5 M: 8 B: 5	Str/Wk	E: 7 M: 4 B: 3	AE	E: 4 M: 6 B: 8
12:00	Sig	E: 3 M: 3 B: 0	Use	E: 2 M: 1 B: 2	Over	E: 3 M: 2 B: 1
1:00	Sig	E: 5 M: 3 B: 7	Use	E: 3 M: 1 B: 5	Over	E: 5 M: 4 B: 6
ALL	Sig	E: 8 M: 6 B: 7	Use	E: 5 M: 2 B: 7	Over	E: 8 M: 6 B: 7

Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below

Essay: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Sig = Significant Revisions

Reflections: Prog = Progress; Grow = Growth; Str/ Wk = Strength and Weaknesses; Use = Usefulness  
 Revisions: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Overall = Overall Portfolio; Miss = Missing

Class	Essay	Final Essay	Aspect	Reflection	Essay	Revisions
12:00	PC	T: 6/6	Prog	T: 4/6	PC	T: 4/6
1:00	PC	T: 12/15	Prog	T: 9/9	PC	T: 9/15
ALL	PC	T: 18/21	Prog	T: 13/15	PC	T: 13/21
12:00	EE	T: 6/6	Grow	T: 4/6	EE	T: 6/6
1:00	EE	T: 11/15	Grow	T: 9/9	EE	T: 9/15
ALL	EE	T: 17/21	Grow	T: 13/15	EE	T: 15/21
12:00	AE	T: 4/6	Str/Wk	T: 3/6	AE	T: 4/6
1:00	AE	T: 9/12*	Str/Wk	T: 8/9	AE	T: 6/12*
ALL	AE	T: 13/18	Str/Wk	T: 11/15	AE	T: 10/18
12:00	Sig	T: 6/6	Use	T: 4/6	Over	T: 5/6
1:00	Sig	T: 8/15	Use	T: 4/9	Over	T: 9/15
ALL	Sig	T: 14/21	Use	T: 7/15	Over	T: 14/21
12:00	Miss	0 missing	Miss	1 missing	Pass	T: 6/6
1:00	Miss	3 missing AE*	Miss	6 missing	Pass	T: 14/15
ALL	Miss	3 missing AE	Miss	7 missing	Pass	20/21

Category: Exceeds = A standard for essay growth; Meets = B standard for essay growth; Below = C or below Essay; PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Sig = Significant Revisions  
Reflections: Prog = Progress; Grow = Growth; Str/ Wk = Strength and Weaknesses; Use = Usefulness  
Revisions: PC = Personal Creed; EE = Expository Essay; AE = Argumentative Essay; Overall = Overall Portfolio; Miss = Missing

**Participants.** The participants met the argumentative writing goal by effectively writing and supporting claims in their papers. 13/18 participants met or exceeded the standard for the argumentative essay, which equals 72% of the participants who submitted an argumentative essay. 5 participants exceeded the standard and received an A on their paper. 8 participants met the standard and received a B. The remaining 5 participants did not meet the standard and received Cs on their papers (Table 50). Unfortunately, 3 students in the 1:00 class failed to turn in an argumentative paper (Table 50). Jacob had stopped coming to class, so it was perhaps not surprising that he failed to turn in a paper. Nathan and Alex, however, had been strong students and active participants. Both young men did not attend class the last week of the semester, but that was the only sign something was wrong.

To meet the standard, the essay needs to “Makes claims that work together to support your position. Describes counterarguments (objections to the claims) and then refutes them.” 4 participants did not effectively make persuasive claims throughout the paper. In each case, the main problem was the essay was not long enough or developed enough for the claims to be persuasive. Throughout the unit, writing and supporting claims was emphasized. This was the main writing goal for the unit. Becky wrote a strong paper arguing for the legalization of marijuana for medical use. Her claims were particularly strong when she argued the benefits of medical marijuana:

I support the use of medical marijuana because of the overwhelming results of how beneficial it is to patients suffering from chronic illnesses. Using cannabis medically helps cancer patients as they are going chemotherapy to ease their nausea and pain as well as with people who are HIV/AIDS positive to help them eat from a poor appetite (Harding). It helps to lower the eye pressure in someone with glaucoma. Also, it has been seen to help people with eating problems such as someone with a small case of anorexia. By having medical marijuana, they could be able to eat food easier. In states where medical marijuana is legal there is approximately 25% lower rate of death from pain killers....In fact, according to a survey of 1,4446 doctors in 72 different countries, 76% of health care professionals support the use of

medical marijuana (Castillo). Many people believe that the benefits that come from using medical marijuana outweigh any of the risks.

Becky clearly states a claim arguing a specific reason why she supports medical marijuana. She follows that claim with examples showing the benefits for “patients suffering from chronic illnesses.” Like she claimed, the list of examples is overwhelming. She ends the paragraph by adding that doctors also support the use and by transitioning to her counterargument where she discusses the risks. Examples from all the participating students can be found in Appendix F.

### **Reflection Goal Analysis (Goal #3)**

**All Students.** The final portfolio rubric had criteria specifically for revision. The criteria stated, “To what extent is the (essay name) well-revised based on feedback? Do the changes significantly improve the essay?” The categories were “No revisions,” “Some,” and “YES!” The students received additional points on their original essay grade for revisions, 10 points for some revision, and 25 for extensive revisions. The Personal Creed was the paper with the strongest revisions. 26 out of 37 students made revisions to this paper. 15 students made significant changes that dramatically improved the paper. Slightly fewer students made at least some revision to their expository essay, 24 made at least some revisions, and 8 made extensive revisions. 23 students revised their argumentative essays, with 8 making significant changes.

Table 53. Essay Comparison: Original to Revised Essay Grades for All Students

Class	Personal Creed			Expository		
	Original	Revised		Original	Revised	
12:00	E: 0 M: 8 B: 8	E: 11 M: 6 B: 1	E: 1 M: 6 B: 9	E: 7 M: 9 B: 2		
1:00	E: 3 M: 7 B: 6	E: 7 M: 9 B: 3	E: 2 M: 9 B: 4	E: 7 M: 6 B: 6		
All	E: 3 M:15 B:14	E: 18 M: 15 B: 4	E: 3 M: 15 B: 13	E: 14 M: 15 B: 8		

Table 53 shows the impact of revisions. When the students first submitted their personal creed essays, only 3 students exceeded the standard. At the end of the semester, 18 exceeded. While 15 students met the standard both times, this reflects the number of students who moved from below to meets. 14 students were below the standard when they first submitted their essays. Only 4 students were still below the standard at the end of the semester. Similarly, 3 students exceeded on the original expository essay; by the final portfolio, 14 exceeded. 15 students met on both drafts, but 5 students moved from below to meet the standard.

**Participants.** The participants made the most revisions to their expository essays. 15 made at least some revisions, and 7 made extensive revisions. 13 out of 21 students made revisions to their personal creed paper. However, 10 participants made significant changes that dramatically improved the paper. 10 students revised their argumentative essays, with 4 making significant changes.

Table 54. Essay Comparison: Original to Revised Essay Grades for Participants

Class	Personal Creed			Expository			
	Original	Revised			Original	Revised	
12:00	E: 0 M: 2 B: 3	E: 4 M: 2 B: 0	E: 0 M: 2 B: 4	E: 3 M: 3 B: 0			
1:00	E: 3 M: 5 B: 5	E: 6 M: 6 B: 3	E: 2 M: 6 B: 5	E: 6 M: 5 B: 4			
All	E: 3 M: 7 B: 8	E: 10 M: 8 B: 3	E: 2 M: 8 B: 9	E: 9 M: 7 B: 4			

Table 54 shows the impact of revisions. When the participants first submitted their personal creed essays, only 3 exceeded the standard. At the end of the semester, 10 exceeded. 7 participants originally met the standard, and 8 met after final revisions. This number also reflects the number of participants who moved from below to meets. 8 participants were below the standard when they first submitted their essays. Only 3 students were still below the standard at the end of the semester. Similarly, 2 participants exceeded on the original expository essay; by the final portfolio, 9 exceeded. 8 participants met on the first drafts, and 7 met at the end. However, only 4 participants were still below the standard on their final drafts.

**Unit Reflections.** To ascertain the 3<sup>rd</sup> goal, students will be able to reflect on their own learning, students anonymously completed guided end of course questions at the end of each unit. The questions were designed to gauge what they believe about their learning in the unit as well as to give the students an opportunity to guide instruction in the next unit. Two questions did change on the end of course reflection. Instead of asking how they saw the ideas from the unit helping in the next unit, the final reflection asked, “ How do you see the ideas in the class helping you in Freshman Composition II? In other college courses?”

Instead of asking what the students would like to learn on the next unit, the end of course reflection asked, “If you were in my Freshman Composition II class, what would you like to see discussed? What kinds of writing assignments would you like to do?” The frequencies of responses were tallied (Shank, 2002). These reflections were also segmented by research question, notes were made in the margins, and the notes were used to form initial codes (Creswell, 2013).

28 students completed the end-of-course reflections. In response to the question: What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **most** useful for learning to write? 8 students said that peer review was the most useful activity. One student wrote, “I never realized it until now how much the peer review helps.” 6 students discussed learning the essay structure. 3 discussed citation and sources, and 2 mentioned the writing process. One of these students said that the most useful experiences was “writing the essay in sections. When we would write the problem statement then the rest of the paper. It helped me at least.” 4 students mentioned the group discussions and activities as being most useful. One wrote that the most useful experience was “the use of groups to discuss scenarios of arguments.” 4 mentioned argumentation in particular saying learning “how to start an argument in a civilized manner for further discussion” was particularly useful.

In general students felt that all the experiences were useful since 11 people answered, “All the experiences were useful,” in answer to the question “What ideas, concepts, activities did you find the **least** useful for learning to write?” 3 left the least useful experience section blank. The only items that were mentioned by more than one person were blogs, which were mentioned 3 times, and notes were mentioned 2



times. 14 students discussed the value of knowing how to write in answer to the question: “ How do you see the ideas in the class helping you in Freshman Composition II? In other college courses?” 3 discussed sources and citation, and 2 mentioned research. 2 students mentioned that ekphrasis and tropes would help them in the future.

**Students Reflections on Their Learning During the Course:** The end-of-course reflections contain a question to assess the students’ perspective of their growth: How are our discussions working to help shape your identity as a college student AND as a writer? 6 students mentioned growing as a writer, and 3 discussed gaining confidence in their writing. One wrote, “The discussions give me confidence in my writing. I feel better about having to write in other classes now from building confidence in comp.” Another discussed how they still struggle with sharing out loud, “but through papers I’ve been able to express my ideas and get them fully together to get my point across.” 6 students discussed gaining confidence during discussions. One wrote, “Our discussions are helping me to come out of my shell and become more outspoken and confident.” 3 more discussed becoming open about sharing opinions and 3 more mentioned self-discovery. One said, “I feel more open about my likes and about myself then I did in the beginning of the semester. Writing the code allowed me to really learn about myself.” Finally, 7 students discussed the value of hearing other perspectives. One student wrote, “They show me the ideas of all my classmates, and that makes me think about how everyone else thinks.” 3 students did express negative opinions. 2 said the discussions did not help shape them as writers or college students, and 1 said they despise writing.

**Students Writing Reflections.** The students also wrote a final writing reflection paper. The directions for the writing reflection were included in the portfolio directions. The directions stated: “Write a paragraph describing your reflection and revision process. Write a paragraph discussing how you have grown and changed as a writer over the semester. Conclude with a paragraph assessing your strengths and weaknesses as a writer along with a consideration of how you can use this knowledge to continue to grow throughout college (and/or your career).” The portfolio directions also included guided questions to help them reflect on their writing (Appendix ?). The students were most successful at describing their revision process and growth as a writer. 25 out of 27 students who wrote a reflection did a good job describing both their revision process and growth as a writer. The students also described their strengths and weaknesses well with 24 meeting the standard. The one area where they did not succeed was in describing how they will use the knowledge in the future. Only 15 students did an adequate job. 10 students did not submit a writing reflection

**Participants Writing Reflections.** 14 participants submitted a writing reflection. The participants were most successful at describing their revision process and growth as a writer. 12 out of 14 participants who wrote a reflection did a good job describing both their revision process and growth as a writer. To describe her growth, Laurel wrote, “Before I took this course I was barely able to write a story let alone write a cited paper with correct citations. I have truly enjoyed learning in this course due to the fact that I actually did learn.” Cathy showed good insight into her revision of her personal creed. She said, “I did however, realize that in my personal creed statement

I was not very descriptive. I feel like it being my first essay I was very closed in revealing my personal life in my essays, but now at the end of class I see that the more personal something is the more it grabs the reader's attention and gets them invested in the story.”

The participants also described their strengths and weaknesses well with 11 meeting the standard. Henry described his strengths nicely. He wrote, “My strengths would be that I can get readers attention and that I can relate to them and get them interested in my stories. When you write from the heart or pour everything into your stories I think readers can tell and feel more in tune with what you are trying to say.” The one area where they did not succeed was in describing how they will use the knowledge in the future. Only 7 participants did an adequate job. Felicity did a nice job saying how she will use the knowledge in the future. She said, “I plan to become an elementary teacher, and it is an immensely useful skill to be able to explain your thoughts and ideas thoroughly and with ease. That is what this course has taught me to do, and I will always be grateful for that.”

Caitlin was one of the participants who expressed a great deal of anxiety about writing and discussion at the beginning of the course. She did a wonderful job

discussing how the course impacted her understanding of writing in general. She wrote:

At the beginning of the semester I was extremely nervous about putting my work out there to be judged. My thought process on this was all about criticism, I did not want to let other people that I had never met before be the judge on if my essay was good enough. The fact that it was a requirement was the only reason anyone saw my essays or blogs. I learned that putting my work out there is not a bad thing. People that look over my blogs and essay are not there to judge me, but to help me reach the highest level that I possibly can. I am very thankful that I was pushed out of my bubble because it opened me up and showed me that getting things wrong is not anything to be embarrassed about.

## Appendix L: Unit Reflections

### Unit One Student Reflections (26 students)

Key Concepts	Most Useful Experiences	Least Useful Experiences
Ekphrasis (9) Personal writing (7) Tropes (5) Revision (2) Develop writing (3) Descriptive writing (7) Author's purpose (1) Finding Ideas (1) Self Exploration (5) All (1) Blogging (4) Tips for Blackboard (1) Success/ Outliers (4)	Tropes (5) Questions to ask self (1) Detailed instructions (1) P.C. journals (12) Examples (1) All (2) Writing techniques (5) Storytelling as argument (3) Format for writing (2) Blogging (1) Peer Review (1) Group activities (3)	Reading the book (1) All useful (12) Literacy narrative (1) Blog responses (4) Examples (1) Repetition in topic (1) Single story video (1) More people need to talk (1) Personal writing jour. (1) Negative influence jour (1) Big words (1) Peer Review
Topics for Next Unit	Ideas that Will Help	Discussions Helping
Wants to pick topic (1) Citations (3) Tools for writing (2) Nothing (5) Don't know (3) Not research (1) Real life examples (1) Poetry and Lit (1) Hands on (1) Group projects (1) Fiction (2) More examples (1) Vocabulary (1) ?	Using opinions (1) Essay organization (2) Description (8) Stories to make writing relatable (1) Personal writing (1) Master tropes (3) Expectations (2) Revision matters (1) Not sure (1) Writing Techniques (2) Clearer drafts (2)	All writing is personal (1) Anxiety in discussions (1) Confidences as writer/ speaker (5) Many ways to discuss (1) Future expectations/goals (3) Work in a groups (1) Good to get feedback (2) Not sure/ hasn't (2) Express opinions in person and writing (10) Pursue writing as career (1) Group mates matter (1) Listening to other perspectives (3) Better writing feedback (1) New skills (1) Bonds with peers (1) New writing perspective (1) Self understanding (5)

**Invivo Codes:**

Unit One Invivo Codes	
Category	Quotes
Key Concepts	<p>“How to write about myself without just telling a story.”</p> <p>“I learned that people have many different views on success.”</p> <p>“I realized how important my influences were to me.”</p> <p>“I learned about the master tropes and better ways to formulate ideas for papers.”</p> <p>“Some key ideas that I learned how to express myself in ways I never have. As well as learning to explain success in many different ways.”</p> <p>“I learned how to effectively write a personal creed statement, and how to make my writing more detailed and interesting by using ekphrasis.”</p> <p>“I really liked it when we blogged. It made me get creative!”</p>
Most Useful Experiences	<p>“I liked the personal creeds and building up my writing skills that way.”</p> <p>“I liked learning about ekphrasis because it made me write my essay more detailed.”</p> <p>“Ekphrasis, I’ve never really thought about describing in that way, and a deeper and clearer thought process on how to write a story.”</p> <p>“I found that past experiences were very good for personal writing plots.”</p> <p>“The group activities really helped me learn.”</p> <p>“Our peer review activity helped a lot for me. I also liked the library session to start our next unit. I think it will help a lot.”</p> <p>“I liked the personal creeds and building up my writing skills that way. Also, the group discussions were great for getting advice.”</p>
Least Useful Experiences	<p>“I wasn’t a big fan of the journals but that’s because I don’t like writing about myself.”</p> <p>“If we are going to have discussions in class more people need to want to talk.”</p> <p>“I felt that the activity were we had to map out our writing experiences didn’t help much.”</p> <p>“Reading the book---yes it gives a visual example of tropes and gives an idea of how to write a personal narrative, but we only read from it a couple times.”</p> <p>“Peer review didn’t give me a whole lot of feed back.”</p> <p>“Blogs were useful, but not as much as the rest of the assignments.”</p>

Topics for Next Unit	<p>“I would just like to be able to pick my own topics, even if it still has guidelines to be math/science based or educational.”</p> <p>“More worksheets would be great. I have trouble when I don’t have a physical thing to work on.”</p> <p>“Citing! I suck at it and was never taught how to properly cite a source.”</p>
Ideas that Will Help	<p>“The personal creed is a practice writing to find yourself, and for your own opinions. Research papers are your opinions supported by research evidence.”</p> <p>“Knowing how to incorporate the master tropes will be nice for keeping the reader interesting, I think.”</p> <p>“Well I definitely get how descriptions and irony and figurative language can help.”</p>
Discussions Helping	<p>“Getting feedback and support from the class is nice and helps to build writing confidence.”</p> <p>“All essays and writings come from you, your opinions and who you are, further embedding your personalities and beliefs, while also making you write to improve grammar tropes, styles, and more.”</p> <p>“The discussions are working to help shape my identity as a college student and a writer because it’s helping me contemplate where I am in life and where and how to get where I want to be.”</p> <p>“When I don’t totally understand something, I get to hear others opinions, so that I can make my assumptions as well. As a college student, it has shown me that it is okay to talk to other people, and listen to their ideas and point of views.”</p> <p>“I feel like unless you’re in the right group you either get distracted or don’t really talk.”</p> <p>“The discussions have been great. The more and more we do them, the better we will get.”</p>

### Unit Two Student Reflections (18 students)

Key Concepts	Most Useful Experiences	Least Useful Experiences
Expository writing (6) Sources/Citations (7) Using quotes (2) Success is complex Ekphrasis in expository Revision Appeals Flow	Expository Writing (4) Citation/ Sources (4) Peer Review (3) Notes (3) Group Discussions (6) Blogs Ekphrasis (2) Open environment for ideas	All were useful (12) Tropes Reading Book Peer Review MLA Blogs Writing Essay in Stages
Topics for Next Unit	Ideas that Will Help	Discussions Helping
Fiction Argument writing (5) Citation/ Sources (3) Outline/ Format (2) Class Discussion Left blank (4)	Ekphrasis and sources (6) Ekphrasis (3) Citation/Sources (3) Essay structure (5) Topic choice	Self discovery (2) New Perspectives Forming/Expressing opinions (5) Gaining confidence (2) Thinking deeper (3) Writing improving (4) Doubt writing skills Give better speeches Peer Review

#### Invivo Codes:

Unit Two Invivo Codes	
Category	Quotes
Key Concepts	“I learned how to research from not only a website but through an interview too. The expository essay helped me learn how to get my essay to flow.” “I’ve learned the master tropes, how to cite, how to properly write and review an essay and I’ve learned about myself as a writer.” “To use ekphrasis and use different types of tropes to emphasize or promote ideas.”
Most Useful Experiences	“I liked having to break down the interactions and subtle things while watching the episode of Supernatural.” “I enjoyed doing group discussions and really like learning about ekphrasis. I also really liked blogging.” “I found the peer workshop activities most useful for learning to write expository essays.” “How to tell it as it is, without it being an argumentative essay.” “The more open feeling/ environment for ideas was enjoyable.”



Least Useful Experiences	<p>“The group analysis. I didn’t get any feedback.”</p> <p>“Reading the book—reading subtracted from my time to work on the essays as well as do other homework from other classes. Most of the information I gathered from reading, I already knew or learned in class.”</p> <p>“I liked learning about the master tropes but don’t really understand them still and don’t see myself using it much.”</p>
Topics for Next Unit	<p>“I like writing my essays in parts like we did with out expository.”</p> <p>“ How to get a point across in an argumentative essay.”</p> <p>“I would like to see more sources being cited because I still don’t think I am doing it write.”</p>
Ideas that Will Help	<p>“The research portion from unit 2 will be crucial in this essay. Having a fully backed up argument will make me sound less like a conspiracy theorist.”</p> <p>“In this unit, I will have to be relying on the logos of other people. Therefore, I will need to use my previous knowledge of citation methods to incorporate their professional statements. In addition, by using ekphrasis and/or tropes, I will be able to communicate my message vividly and effectively.”</p> <p>“I feel that giving my opinions will be easier as will my information gathering (hopefully).”</p> <p>“They will help me because I will be able to use ekphrasis in my next writing because I know how to use it properly.”</p>
Discussions Helping	<p>“Our writings are showing me that I am not as good of a writer as I once thought I was.”</p> <p>“They help a lot. I feel like I have found a new love and appreciation for the writing process.”</p> <p>“It’s helping my creative thinking and improving my writing skills, which I’ve loved doing since I was a kid.”</p> <p>“I think they help because I am learning to tell people my opinion and to not think all my ideas are stupid.”</p> <p>“Our discussions are helping me think deeper into my writing. It is a great tool to use to help students practice their writing.”</p> <p>“I’ve been putting more thought into actions and interactions, how something simple can be deep and something complex can be interesting.”</p> <p>“The more we learn and write, the more I discover about myself and my thoughts and opinions. Now I know how to fully formulate my thoughts so that others understand also.”</p> <p>“Our discussions have helped me:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become more outspoken and assertive with my thoughts and ideas</li> <li>• Overcome my fear of meeting and speaking to new people</li> <li>• Gain a vast amount of knowledge about English composition that I will undoubtedly use both during my college career and throughout my entire life</li> </ul>

**End-of-Course Student Reflections (28 students)**

<b>Key Concepts</b>	<b>Most Useful Experiences</b>	<b>Least Useful Experiences</b>
Writing process (2) Argumentative structure & strategies (9) Balanced argument (12) Rhetorical appeals (2) Research (3) Ekphrasis	Class discussion (4) Peer review (8) Argumentation (4) Essay structure (6) Writing process (2) Examples & videos All (2) Quotes and Sources (3)	Everything helped (11) Left blank (3) Blogs (3) Wants to learn more about seeing both sides Not attending class Writing without discussion partner Notes (2) Mini-assignments Topics student chose Counter arguments (2) Ideas from previous units for argument writing Talking out loud
<b>Topics for Next Class</b>	<b>Ideas that Will Help</b>	<b>Discussions Helping</b>
Argumentative (5) Expository (2) Blogs Fiction (5) Poetry (3) Multiple essays (2) Citation (2) Personal writing (4) Same format (2) I don't know (3) Research skills (3) Movie reviews	Knowing how to write essays (7) Clear expression (2) Effective writing (5) MLA/ Citation (3) Helps with speech class and talking out loud Ekphrasis/ tropes (2) Research writing (2) Develop writing authority I don't know Videos All (3) Active writer	Peer review (2) Other perspectives (7) Successful person (2) Confidence in writing (3) Growth as a writer (6) Develop Opinions (3) Self-confidence (6) Self-discovery (3) Not helpful (2) Despises writing Helpful examples

## Invivo Codes:

End-of-Course Invivo Codes	
Category	Quotes
Key Concepts	<p>“I learned to write in a certain way to appeal to different audiences.”</p> <p>“I learned you have to have a counter argument.”</p> <p>“I learned how to look at different point of views and not just my own.”</p> <p>“The building blocks of an argumentative essay; how to develop an argument.”</p> <p>“I learned how to break down two sides of an argument based off of evidence.”</p> <p>“The process of jutting all my ideas down and going from there. Don’t get clogged and just stop your writing.”</p>
Most Useful Experiences	<p>“I would say that the most useful idea that I learned was how to construct the argumentative essay.”</p> <p>“I thought that the argumentative essay layout paper was a great help to understand it better.”</p> <p>“The peer review was helpful because they helped me merge different povs.”</p> <p>“I enjoyed being able to learn how to involve quotes into the papers.”</p> <p>“I found the in class participation helped the most.”</p> <p>“The use of groups to discuss scenarios of arguments.”</p> <p>“I never realized it until now how much the peer review helps.”</p> <p>“How to start an argument in a civilized manner for further discussion.”</p> <p>“I found the peer revision day the most useful because someone else was able to read the paper and argue against it.”</p> <p>“Writing the essay in sections. When we would write the problem statement then the rest of the paper. It helped me at least.”</p> <p>“The use of formatting and citing is a huge process of writing your argument.”</p>
Least Useful Experiences	<p>“I would have liked to learn about how to see both sides of the argument easier.”</p> <p>“Not showing up to class didn’t help.”</p> <p>“Writing alone without discussion partners.”</p> <p>“A lot of mini assignments on the side, for the class in general, not just for the argumentative essay. I found it distracting from major projects and time-consuming to worry about several projects at once, along with homework for other classes.”</p> <p>“I felt like the notes just ruled on and on.”</p> <p>“probably having to try and understand both sides even though mine was right.”</p>
Topics for Next Class	<p>“The argumentative essays and blog posts were pretty cool. It lets you have discussions with your whole class and/or professor.”</p> <p>“I would just like to see more assignments on citing sources. I like the personal writing assignments.”</p> <p>“I would like to discuss how to do book and magazine research in more detail.”</p> <p>“I would like to go over more fictional writing.”</p>

<p>Ideas that Will Help</p>	<p>“Being prepared and researching your topics before you write is crucial, so I don’t mess up.”</p> <p>“They let me express my thoughts more clearly throughout my papers. It’s a better comprehension of class time and keeps me focused.”</p> <p>“It will help because I learned to use ekphrasis which I didn’t know how to do when I started.”</p> <p>“I’ve expanded as a writer and how to properly express my ideas.”</p> <p>“We have set up the basics to writing a research paper that will help when learning the next few rules.”</p> <p>“I learned how to correctly write papers and that will be help me in all if not most of my future classes.”</p> <p>“It helped me become a more active writer.”</p>
<p>Discussions Helping</p>	<p>“Outliers helped give tips on how to be a successful person in general.”</p> <p>“The discussions give me confidence in my writing. I feel better about having to write in other classes now from building confidence in comp.”</p> <p>“I feel more open about my likes and about myself then I did in the beginning of the semester. Writing the code allowed me to really learn about myself.”</p> <p>“The discussions are slowly helping me be more comfortable talking out loud and helps me as a writer by doing the peer revision.”</p> <p>“It’s hard for me to share my ideas out loud, but through papers I’ve been able to express my ideas and get them fully together to get my point across.”</p> <p>“Our discussions are helping me to come out of my shell and become more outspoken and confident.”</p> <p>“It helps me find my inner voice.”</p> <p>“They show me the ideas of all my classmates, and that makes me think about how everyone else thinks.”</p>